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RORION GRACIE

THE FAMILY MAVERICK ON FOUNDING THE UFC, GRACIE DIET & BRINGING BJJ TO THE USA

JOAO GABRIEL ROCHA

ON BEATING CANCER & CHASING DREAMS

EDDIE CUMMINGS

NOGI TECH FROM THE LEGLOCK MASTER

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24 HOURS

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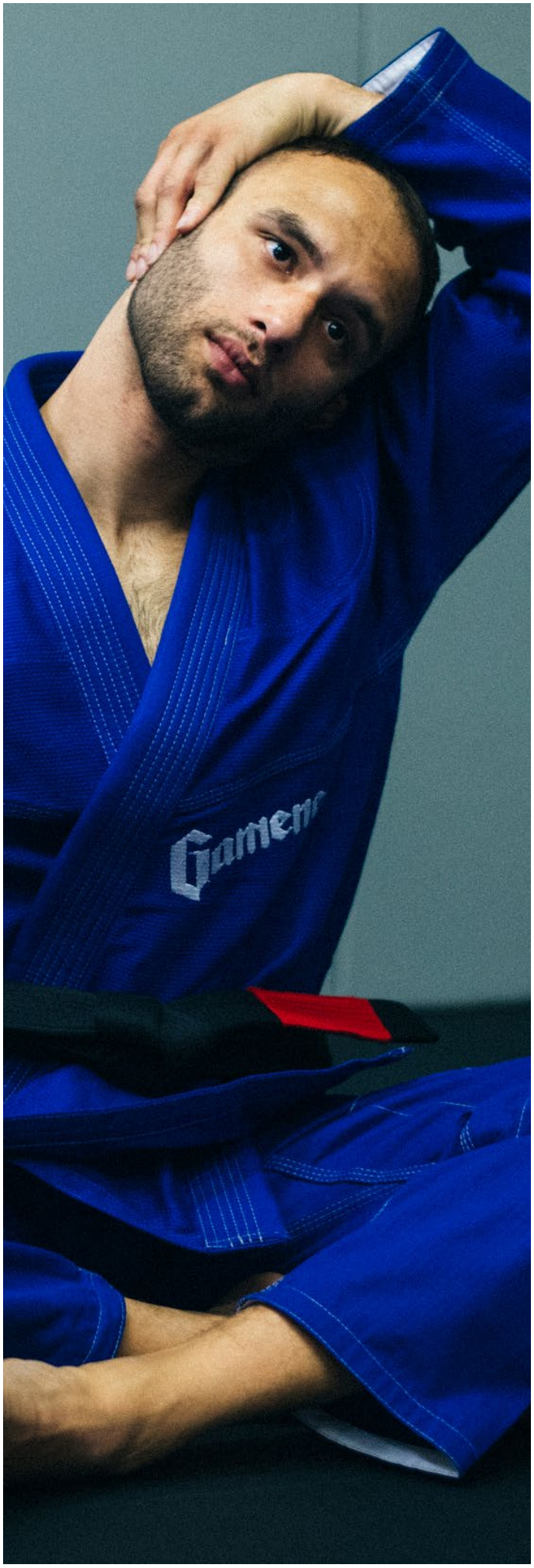

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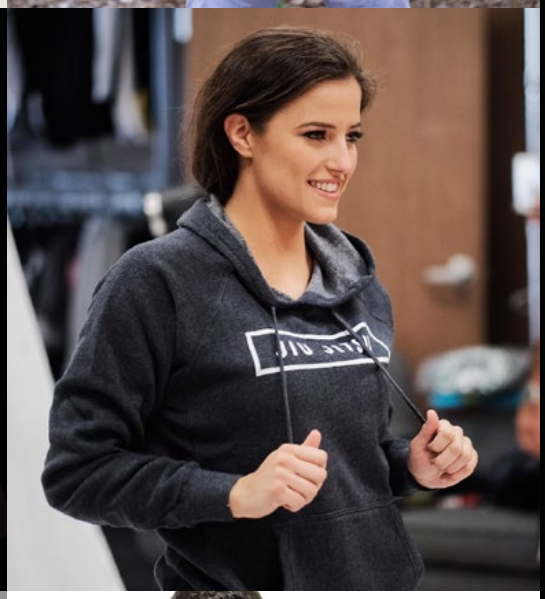

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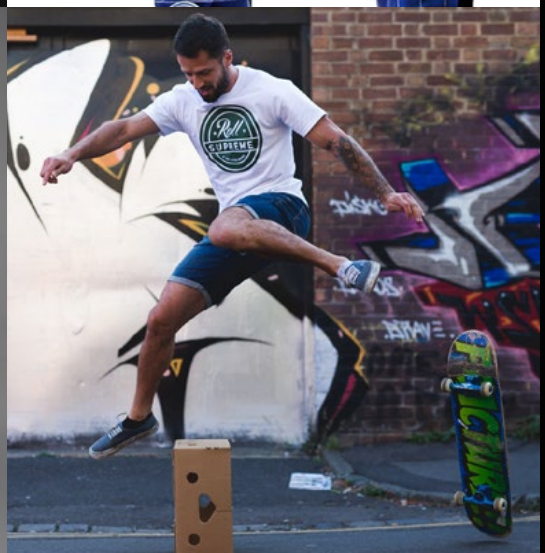

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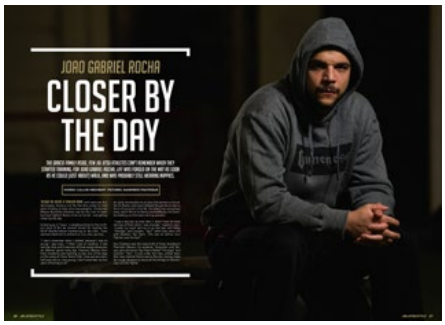
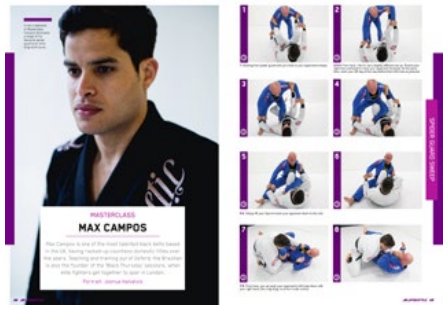
CONTENTS

14: CLASSIC MATCH - ROYLER GRACIE V DE LA RIVA



36: CLOSER BY THE DAY - JOAO GABRIEL ROCHA

42: THE CALM AND THE STORM - GEZARY MATUDA



58: MASTERCLASS - MAX CAMPOS

68: SHEDDING THE GI - EDDIE CUMMINGS

12 THE BIG PICTURE
A striking image from our photo library

16 POSITION STUDY
Leg drag guard pass

18 BELT PROMOTIONS
Snaps from your gradings

20 A WORD FROM THE EDITOR
Let's talk about gis, baby

22 IT'S SCIENCE
Gabriel Arges by numbers

24 HISTORY 101
American Top Team

26 CHARLES NEGROMONTE
Graduate of the Ze Radiola Factory of Champions

48 BECOMING A JIU JITSU ENGINEER
Asking "why?" from the beginning of BJJ training

50 SAM JOSEPH
On ways to invest in your BJJ future

52 MATT JARDINE
Creatures of habit - how can we move past that?

57 OLIVER GEDDES
The two universal rules of BJJ: part one

64 ASK THE DOCTOR
Braulio Estima answers your questions

78 NICK BROOKS
Shows how to pass half guard efficiently

84 FIT TO FIGHT
With Andy Marshall

86 KIT BAG / REVIEW CORNER
All the latest BJJ goodies under the microscope

94 TOURNAMENT FOCUS
IBJJF European Championships 2017

98 MATT BENYON
Is Garry Tonon "The Greatest" of our time?

RORION GRACIE IS A MAVERICK. HIS EFFORTS IN BRINGING ATTENTION TO GRACIE JIU JITSU HAVE BEEN ESSENTIAL IN GIVING BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU ITS CURRENT GLOBAL PLATFORM, AND IT'S BECAUSE OF HIS ABILITY TO THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX THAT WE NOW ENJOY THE SPORT OF MMA.
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24 HOURS
EDDIE CUMMINGS

30 RORION GRACIE
Red Belt Grand Master

JIU JITSU STYLE

SECOND FRONT

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Office: +44 (0)1183 430822
Subscribe: +44 (0)1227 277248
subenquiries@newsstand.co.uk
General: info@bjjstyle.com
Editorial: callum@bjjstyle.com
Advertising: sales@bjjstyle.com

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EDITOR: Callum Medcraft

CONSULTANT EDITOR: Roger Gracie

CONTRIBUTORS:
Roger Gracie
Nick Brooks
Matt Benyon
Max Campos
Can Sönmez
Tyler Bishop
Matt Jardine
Arun Subramanian
Andy Marshall
Braulio Estima
Sam Joseph
Andre Borges
Luke Jarvis
Felix Rodriguez
Eddie Cummings
Oliver Geddes

ILLUSTRATION CONTRIBUTOR:
Gartista

PHOTOGRAHIC CONTRIBUTORS:
Callum Medcraft
Andy Douglas
Luke Jarvis
Jeff Chu
Flavio Scorsato
Blanca Marisa Garcia
Gameness Fightwear
Joshua Halvatzis

COVER SHOT: Flavio Scorsato

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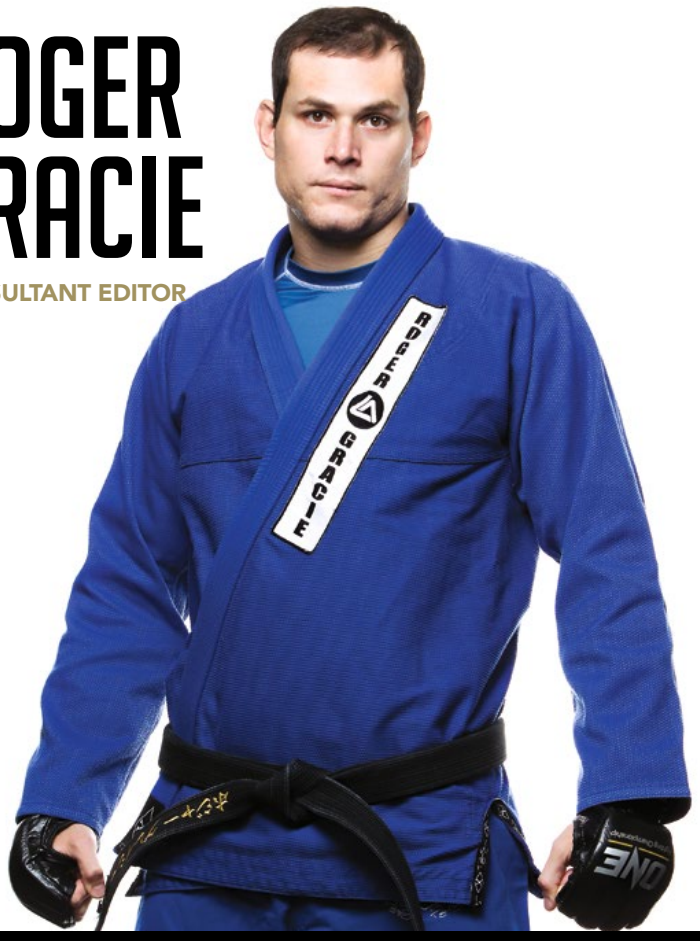
ROGER GRACIE

CONSULTANT EDITOR



"I CAN'T DENY I AM SO HAPPY TO GET MY COMPETITION KIMONO READY FOR THE SUMMER!"

It always feels like so much has happened by the time another magazine comes around. January saw a successful European Championships come and go, we've witnessed plenty of awesome professional jiu jitsu events take shape and – most notably for me – I'm set to return to compete in the gi.

I am very excited to be taking part in the IBJJF Pro League this coming August, and it will be my first time back on the competitive jiu jitsu mats since my super fight with Comprido in 2015. Before that, I hadn't fought anyone since Buchecha at the first Metamoris Pro event.

I have always said that my motivation has never been to gain the most medals, but to try and become the best fighter in the world. Another gold medal doesn't motivate me; testing myself against the best athletes in our sport does.

Competing at the IBJJF Pro League gives me the opportunity to face the best of the best, and I am so excited for this opportunity. Marcus Buchecha is currently considered the man to beat, so I am really motivated by the challenge of fighting him again. MMA has been my focus for a long time now, and it's still a big focus for me, but I can't deny I am so happy to get my competition kimono ready for the summer!

Life has been particularly busy for me due to all the filming we've been doing for my new instructional website, Roger Gracie TV. I have really enjoyed this process, and even though there's been lots of hard work, it will be very satisfying to have my knowledge accessible for everyone, online. Keep an eye on the website guys, as we are not far from launching now.

As always, we've worked very hard to put together another packed magazine for you. We have a great technique series with Eddie Cummings, one of the best nogi fighters out there at the moment. Eddie is known for his submissions, his leg attacks and, basically, always looking for the finish, so I think there are plenty of details to be picked-up from this feature.

We also have our first red belt on this cover: Rorion Gracie. It's crazy to see how far the UFC and MMA have come over the years. Though now a recognised sport in its own right, Rorion started the UFC with the single aim of promoting the efficiency of Brazilian jiu jitsu, and there's no doubt his efforts have shaped the world of martial arts hugely. Make sure you read this in-depth interview for some cool reflections on Rorion's past.

Enjoy the latest issue of the magazine guys and – until next time – keep training and enjoying jiu jitsu.

ROGER GRACIE

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2000
1950
Rolls Gracie
1996 - In the first official "Vale-tudo" match in America involving Gracie Jiu-Jitsu, Rorion defeated kickboxing champion Raign Alegria
UFC

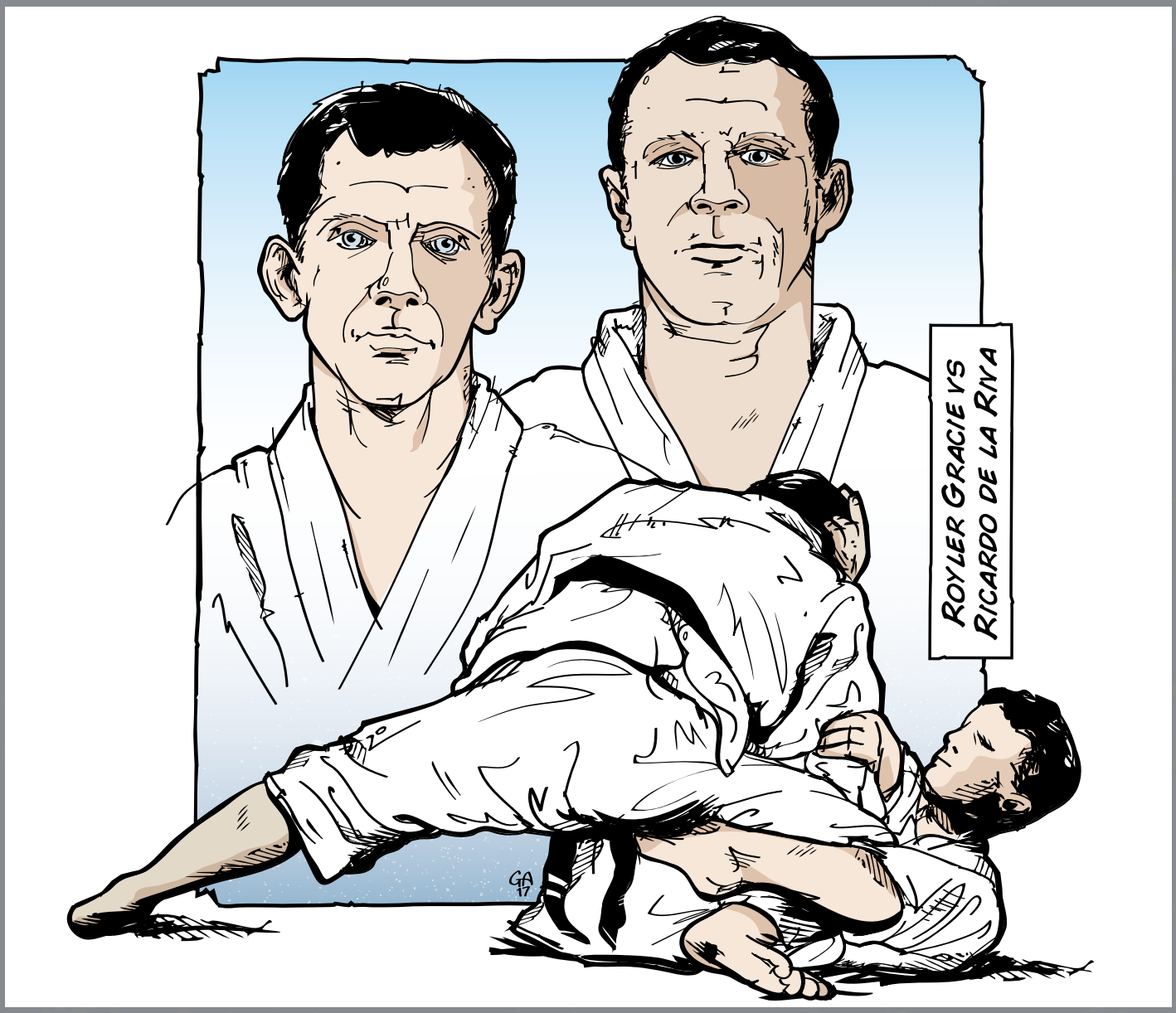
THE BIG PICTURE

Red belt Grand Master, Rorion Gracie, looks over his memorabilia from within the Gracie Jiu Jitsu Academy in Torrance, California.

PICTURE: FLAVIO SCORSATO

CLASSIC MATCH

"TO HELIO, THE LOSS INCURRED BY THE SON WHO MIRRORED HIS STYLE WAS A MAJOR BLOW"
- LUIZ OTAVIO LAYDNER



ROYLER GRACIE VS RICARDO DE LA RIVA

Carlson Gracie was a revolutionary figure in BJJ, one of the first of his family to become independent of Carlos and Helio. His approach to training brought in the importance of physical conditioning as well as technique, which in turn led to an imposing competition team. In the 1980s, the Carlson Gracie team was packed with powerful grapplers. This made for a challenging testing ground, particularly if you were not blessed with a large frame. One of the students had been developing a guard to deal with his much larger training partners.

The position was originally referred to as "guarda pudim" (pudding guard), a reference to its effect on an opponent's balance. However, it has become far better known by the name of that student, its most famous exponent: Ricardo de la Riva. Speaking to *GracieMag*, de la Riva paid tribute to his training partners. "That was the biggest help I could hope to get. Those people passing my guard and squeezing me here, and helping me and telling me, 'Look, de la Riva, that position there, with the leg, gave me a really hard time. How about doing this? I think you can improve it.'"

In the '80s, the clothing brand Company decided to sponsor a tournament, as they noticed jiu jitsu had been gaining popularity among their customer base in Rio de Janeiro. The first Copa Company de Jiu Jitsu was held in 1984 at the Fluminese gymnasium. It proved successful, warranting a second event in July 1985. Other businesses took note of Company's tactics, such as Cantão.

So far, Helio's sons Rickson and Royler had ruled the roost, though other Gracies lacked their aura of invincibility. Carlson's team had overcome a number of Helio's progeny, such as Rorion and Royce, but Rickson and Royler were the star pupils. De la Riva had already proven he was more than a match for Royler's brothers. As a fresh black belt, Carlson entered de la Riva (who normally fought as a featherweight) into an absolute division. It was the first time he had competed at the black belt level. Despite that inexperience, de la Riva won the tournament. Along the way, he defeated Rolker and Royce Gracie.

At the Copa Cantão on the 18th October 1987, de la Riva found himself staring across the mat at Royler Gracie. It was not only a test of de la Riva's growing reputation, but a chance for the Carlson team to finally prove they could beat the very best Helio had to offer. De la Riva's team mate Clovis de Souza had fallen to Royler in the semi-final: it was up to de la Riva to topple the champion.

WORDS: CAN SÖNMEZ ILLUSTRATIONS: GARTISTA

THE MATCH

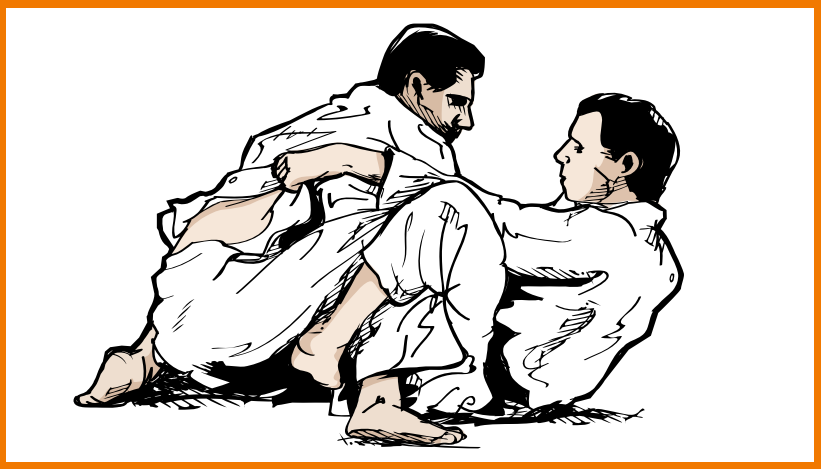
The first couple of minutes are standing, with Royler pulling guard twice. He secures a collar grip and tries for a scissor sweep, then when neither that nor his butterfly hook progresses, he looks to stand a third time. De la Riva seizes his leg, swivelling around to keep Royler on his back. Gracie really wants the armbar, then when de la Riva almost passes, Royler rolls over his own shoulders to end up in a passing position himself.

De la Riva can now bring his soon-to-be-eponymous guard to bear. He almost gets a sweep off a brief switch to closed guard, but Royler recovers. They continue to battle from open guard. At the six-minute mark, the crowd roars in appreciation as de la Riva rotates through for a sweep. It doesn't last long, de la Riva bailing to his guard about forty seconds later, fencing with his legs.

An exhilarating sequence starts with about a minute left in the match. It looks like Royler is about to knee slide through. De la Riva spins behind for a single leg. Royler stabilises and it seems like he might pass right into a choke, but de la Riva gets underneath with his legs, rolling backwards. Royler fights to keep his balance, drives forward, then de la Riva perfectly times a sweep. A few seconds later, the match is over: de la Riva wins on points.

"THAT WAS THE BIGGEST HELP I COULD HOPE TO GET. THOSE PEOPLE PASSING MY GUARD AND SQUEEZING ME HERE, AND HELPING ME AND TELLING ME, 'LOOK, DE LA RIVA, THAT POSITION THERE, WITH THE LEG, GAVE ME A REALLY HARD TIME. HOW ABOUT DOING THIS?"

MATCH LENGTH: 10 MINS
LOCATION: RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL
VENUE: CLUB MUNICIPAL
EVENT: COPA CANTAO



AFTERMATH

Luiz Otavio Laydner, the author of *With the Back on the Ground*, argues that this defeat was crucial in changing the landscape of BJJ:

"It's extremely difficult to reduce historic processes to precise moments, but in a way it can be said that this loss of Royler's was the crack that definitively shattered the hegemony of the Gracie Academy, which would never recover its former championship dominance. To Helio, the loss incurred by the son who mirrored his style was a major blow."

Although de la Riva was humble and avoided the limelight, his instructor was thrilled by the victory. Carlson proudly praised his team on television, stating that while the Gracie Academy could match their technique, Carlson's students had "more grit, they listen to the teacher more. I think that's what prevails."

According to Laydner, getting a rematch "became an obsession for Helio and Royler". He quotes Royler as saying "My current goal is to beat Ricardo. There's nothing else I think about, and I know that's now my big chance at rehabilitation. I went unbeaten for eight years, and that was the first time I lost as a black belt. That's why I'm so anxious."

That second shot was delayed because Carlson was angling for another rematch, keen to put his student Cassio Cardoso up against Royler. He even prevented de la Riva from entering the fourth Copa Company to face Royler, in an attempt to gain some bargaining power.

Royler did eventually get another chance at de la Riva, but the result was the same (although this time, the decision went to the judges). Once again, de la Riva's signature guard was decisive, keeping Royler wrapped within it for most of the encounter. It took until their third meeting, in May 1989, for Royler to get the better of him. The gap was small, with another judges' decision required to separate them. De la Riva guard has since become a staple of the sport.

SOURCES: *WITH THE BACK ON THE GROUND*, LUIZ OTAVIO LAYDNER • *GRACIEMAG* • BJJHEROES.COM • SLIDEYFOOT.COM

POSITION STUDY

LEG DRAG GUARD PASS

THE LEG DRAG IS A GRAPPLING POSITION COMMONLY USED AS A WAY TO CONTROL AN OPPONENT'S HIPS BEFORE ADVANCING TO A GUARD PASS. IN BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU'S SPORTING ENVIRONMENT, THE LEG DRAG STARTED TO BE SEEN IN ITS RUDIMENTARY FORM DURING THE 1990S, AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE TOREANDO AND STACKING GUARD PASSES.

It was later enhanced by competitors such as Fernando "Terere", Leo Vieira and Vitor "Shaolin" in the 2000s era, though the ground-breaking technical advances seen on today's BJJ tournament circuit are attributed to Rafael and Guilherme Mendes' efforts in recent times.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE LEG DRAG

Similar positions to the leg drag are seen in older grappling styles, including wrestling's 'navy ride'. Though it is likely that the leg drag also occurred in early judo exchanges, particularly under nanatei rules, we could not see any positions resembling the leg drag on the (limited) video content available of old tournament footage.

In jiu jitsu, the first nuances of the leg drag started occurring as early as the grappling style established a competitive setting. These were, however, more rudimentary forms of the leg drag, as seen in 1996's match between Royler Gracie and Marcos Aurelio during the quarter-final of the 1st World Championship.

After the CBJJ (Brazilian Jiu jitsu Federation) was established in 1994, jiu jitsu's technical growth was noted on a large scale throughout many different aspects of the game. One of the biggest technical developments was focused around guard passing, and leg dragging in particular.

TOP LEG DRAGGERS

RAFAEL MENDES
GUILHERME MENDES
CAIO TERRA
ISAAC DOEDERLEIN
MIKEY MUSUMECI
PAULO MIYAO
JOAO MIYAO
GIANNI GRIPPO
GABRIEL MORAES
LUCAS LEPRI
FERNANDO TERERÊ
LEONARDO VIEIRA
VITOR SHAOLIN

ILLUSTRATION: GARTISTA ≡ WORDS: ANDRE BORGES EDITOR AT WWW.BJJHEROES.COM

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BELT PROMOTIONS

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E.J Enua was promoted to blue belt by head, Grayson West, at Leigion 13, located in Perth, Australia.

Donald Hodgins was promoted to purple belt by Paul Elezaj of Alliance Jiu Jitsu, Port Huron.

Wing Chau Cheung was promoted to brown belt by Steve Campbell at Stealth BJJ.

Charly Bebbington was promoted to purple belt by her dad, Tony Bebbington.

Plenty of new belts at team Choco, Germany! Vinnie Carlucci promoted the following people: Jeff Linzey to black belt, Daniel Kimmling to brown belt, Ed Foo to brown belt, Tobias Davenport to brown belt, John Bailey to purple belt, Jan Kamm to blue belt, Marc Otto to blue belt.

George Henderson was promoted to blue belt by coach Bryan Gorman of Rilion Gracie Ireland.

Catherine Horner was promoted to blue belt at Pendle Brazilian Jiu Jitsu under Head Coach John 'Staffordshire' Stokes, affiliated with Lucio Sergio Dos Santos (Lucio Sergio BJJ Lifestyle).

Gemma Postins was promoted to blue belt by Nick Tiscoe and Mark Thomas at North Shore BJJ, Newquay.

Luiz Crespo was to purple belt by professors Marco and Phillipe at Gracie Barra HQ in Irvine, California.

Nedzad Secibovic from Boxing & MMA Linz/Austria was promoted to blue belt by Nicholas Brooks.

Tom Wortman was promoted to blue belt by Buckhead Jiu Jitsu head coach, Sam Joseph.

Donatas Uktveris was promoted to black belt by Roger Gracie and Maurcio Gomes.

LET'S TALK ABOUT GIS, BABY.

Picking out my first gi was as daunting as choosing my wedding suit. I needed to impress; make people realise that even though I'd never done this before, I belonged.

I had to feel comfy (I guess), but far more importantly, I had to radiate the confidence of a man with everything figured out. A lot to ask, I know, but you've got to aim high.

I opted for a pragmatic approach and picked out a gi before my first class. I mean, come on, I was obviously going to gain brownie points for having the right kit before I'd even stepped on a mat. For context, we're talking over nine years ago and options were limited, but I managed to track down a traditional jujitsu kimono on the Internet. It was simple in design; plain white in colour, a little flimsy, but it did have two stick-men grapplers embroidered onto one of the trouser legs – an obvious purchase. Having a gi under my arm en route to the academy made me feel like I'd already taken the first steps in the sport. I was committed, no matter what.

As fate would have it, my first gi trousers were literally ripped off my legs inside three hours of being on the mat. An embarrassing experience? Yes, but the optimist in me recognised opportunity beckoning, so it was time to source the second jiu jitsu gi of my career.

The second gi purchase is a telling one. You're 'in the club' now, you've been OK'd, so what does that mean for your future choices when picking out grappling attire? I used to play football when I was young, and it took a brave kid (or a ridiculously talented kid) to wear anything other than black boots, unless they wanted to be kicked all over the pitch. Back then, it was the same with jiu jitsu; you wore plain white gis – deviate from this at your own peril. Of course, I opted to deviate.

My instructor had told us mystical tales of grapplers who chose to wear blue kimonos – BLUE! My logic was that I'd been to three classes, I'd tried to stand-up in guard, so I was ready for the blueness; bring on gi purchase number two.

"MY FIRST GI TROUSERS WERE LITERALLY RIPPED OFF MY LEGS INSIDE THREE HOURS OF BEING ON THE MAT. AN EMBARRASSING EXPERIENCE? YES, BUT THE OPTIMIST IN ME RECOGNISED OPPORTUNITY BECKONING"

The second gi was an absolute delight - my first love - 'Super Blue'. Truth be told, she was a judo gi, but we never said that out loud. My club logo was sewn onto her chest; the old Gracie triangle on a leg and, despite being hideously ill fitting, she was as tough as old boots. No matter how many kimonos I'd end up bringing into my life, Super Blue was always going to have a special place in my heart.

This brings us on to purchase number three: the 'second rotation' gi. By now, I'd fallen for the sport and was training my nuts off, so hygiene dictated that I added more armour to the closet. Super Blue was my 'cool' kimono, but now I needed a 'competition' kimono.

Number three didn't bring the same spark of excitement as number two, but I welcomed its arrival with open arms. In my continuous effort to be an individual, I'd made sure to spend a ludicrous amount of money importing this one from Japan; a student had to spend his hard-earned loan on something. It was a big buy, but it seemed to quench my thirst for kimonos and would keep me content on the mats for the foreseeable future. They were simpler times.

Soon after purchase number three everything went a bit hazy. No matter how hard I try, I can't remember any of the gis that were in my life during the next couple of years. Much like my dating attempts as a younger man, it's not that these gis weren't important to me, because they always were; life just moves on and sometimes experiences blur together.

Let's fast forward a few gis, shall we?

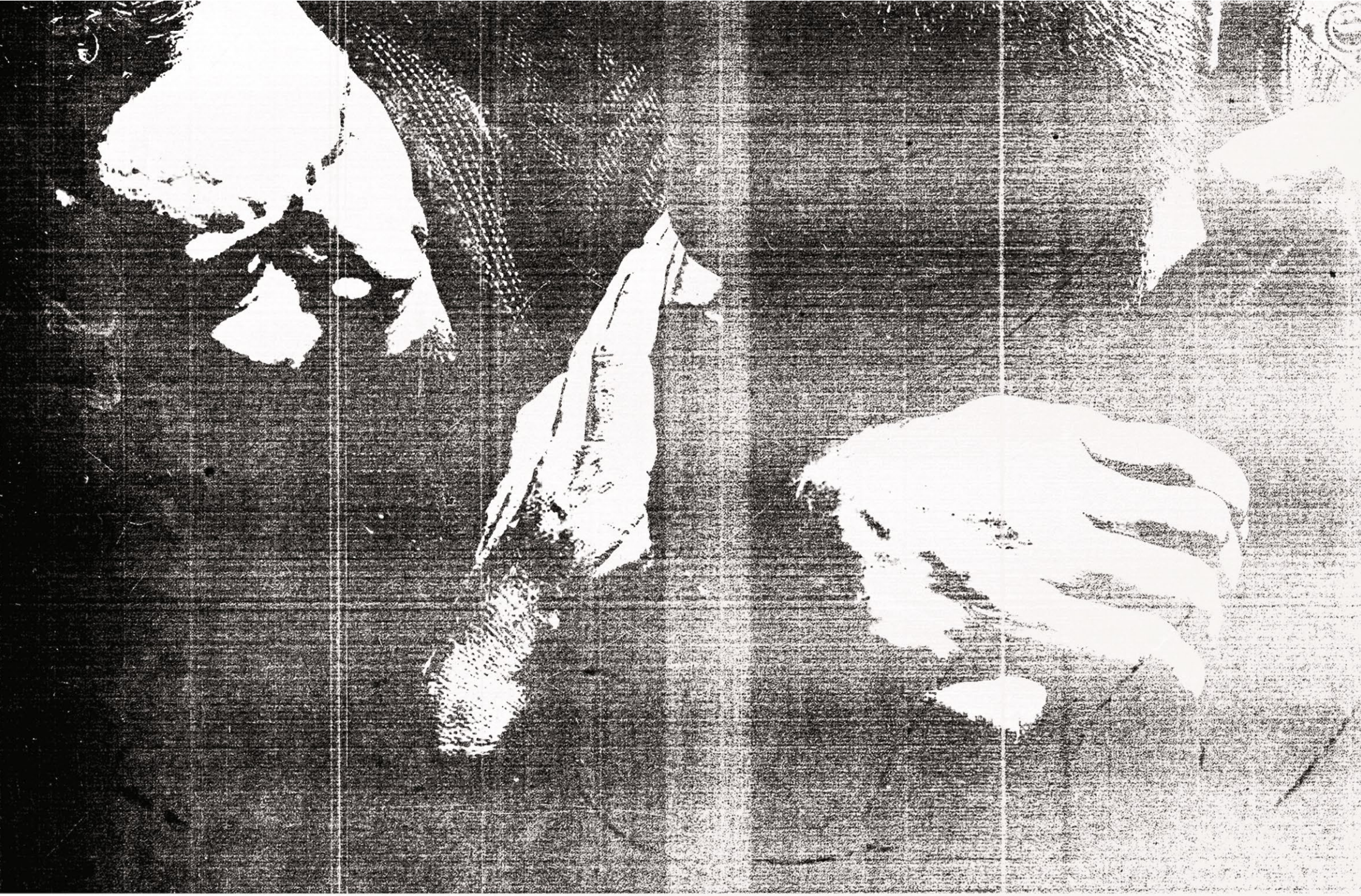
For the sake of argument, let's call this one gi number 7: 'The Lifer'. Purchased upon the sad death of Super Blue, and one of my constants throughout my jiu jitsu journey, this gi was supposed to be the one that would last a lifetime. The jacket was sturdy, the cut fit me perfectly and the collar would chafe my neck when it was bone dry from the wash. After years of looking, I'd found my soul mate.

Fast forward to present day and The Lifer is still with me, though treated a little bit like a forgotten third child. I'm proud to say she still gets pulled out of the closet for a few sessions a month, despite smelling like sweat even after going through the wash. One of the perks of running *Jiu Jitsu Style* means I get to test a lot of gis, but there's something special about bringing out The Lifer, or any of the other kimonos I bought over the years. It always makes me smile.

I guess this is all kind of stupid; you wear a gi to train in, and that's the extent of it. This may be the case for some people, but not for me. I've always enjoyed the vibrant kimono culture within our community, and love looking back at my purchases in the same way I reminisce over bad haircuts. Talking about gis, baby, is just another part of my love affair with the gentle art.

Thanks for picking up our latest issue.

CALLUM MEDCRAFT



THE CLASH BETWEEN ART & SPORT. SHOYOROLL JIU-JITSU

IT'S SCIENCE

BY TYLER BISHOP

GABRIEL ARGES

NO ONE HAS MADE SUCH AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT UPON RECEIVING THEIR BLACK BELT AS GABRIEL ARGES. HAVING DEVELOPED UNDER THE TUTELAGE OF BOTH FELIPE PENA AND ROMULO BARRAL, ARGES SECURED MAJOR ACCOLADES DURING HIS FIRST YEAR AT FAIXA PRETA, INCLUDING GOLD AT THE WPJJC IN ABU DHABI AND CLOSING OUT THE MIDDLEWEIGHT DIVISION AT THE IBJJF WORLDS WITH HIS TEAMMATE, OTAVIO SOUSA. GABRIEL IS KNOWN FOR HIS EXCELLENT GUARD GAME AND TACTICAL AWARENESS DURING HIS MATCHES, MAKING HIM A FORMIDABLE AND WELL EDUCATED FIGHTER.

ARGES USED 6 DIFFERENT TYPES OF SWEEP DURING THE WHOLE STUDY

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80%

OF ARGES' PASSES CAME FROM A STANDING POSITION

ARGES MANAGED TO SCORE FIRST IN 8 OF HIS 11 WINS DURING THE STUDY

91%

OF ARGES' MATCHES ENDED WITH THE VICTORY

45%

OF ARGES' MATCH WINS ENDED VIA A SUBMISSION

ARGES PULLED GUARD IN ALL 12 MATCHES OBSERVED IN THE STUDY

50%

OF ARGES' SWEEPS WERE FROM DE LA RIVA GUARD

TOTAL MATCHES OBSERVED	12
TOTAL MINUTES OBSERVED	81
MATCHES WON BY SUBMISSION	05
MATCHES WON BY POINTS	06
OPPONENT WON MATCH	01
TOTAL MATCHES WON	11

ABSTRACT:

All matches observed of Gabriel Arges used in this small sample occurred inside of his weight division in the years 2014-2017. Only techniques, occurrences, and outcomes that were recorded are displayed in the data below (i.e. if no butterfly sweeps occurred, there will not be a representation of that in the sample data charts). Matches were selected at random based on freely available matches. This is a limited sample but - given the estimated number of matches in this time period – it is well above the percentage necessary to create a scientifically validated trend sampling.

THE BREAKDOWN

There are few competitors that have risen to the top of the ranks faster than Gabriel Arges. A talented purple belt just two years prior, Arges closed out the middleweight division at black belt in 2016. On his way to that title he submitted world champion, Claudio Calasans, and solidified his position as one of the world's best middleweights.

THE STUDY

While many of our study subjects have a very precise set of techniques that they choose to leverage, Arges is the benefactor of diversity. His guard game is his greatest weapon and can be applied in a number of threatening ways. His success with a number of different techniques may be attributed to the fact that he is still improving and evolving.

In the matches we viewed, Arges had an impressive 91% win rate. His submission rate in those wins was approximately 45%. This is no easy feat for a new black belt. It is often said that black belt is where the learning curve is the steepest, but Arges has clearly adapted quickly.

As we studied his game, it became apparent that one of his keys to victory is how well he leverages his guard. He pulled guard - regardless of his opponent's tactics - in 100% of the matches we observed. This proved to a be smart calculation as Arges scored sweeps from guard in 90% of his matches.

Arges seemed to strongly favour de la Riva and closed guard for the majority of his attacks. 50% of his sweeps in the study came from de la Riva. He scored one submission from closed guard, but mixed it seamlessly with de la Riva to score a number of sweeps. Often he would threaten a submission on the arm or knee to force his opponent to concede the position.

While he did often threaten the berimbolo, it was really with a more eclectic mix of finishing sweeps that we saw Arges come to the top. We didn't get to see a lot of Arges' passing game in the study, but when we did, 80% were from the standing position. 60% of those passes were a long step variation.

Arges had no apparent trends in his submissions, but was able to secure them from both bottom and top. We saw him secure a diverse selection of upper and lower body attacks during the duration of the study.

Ultimately, it's easy to see that Arges is a rising star. The only real question is how high will that star rise? He is one of the youngest champions on the scene today, and one who seemingly is improving with every competition.

It's entirely possible that Arges could be headed for the history books.

SWEEPS (POSITION)

DE LA RIVA GUARD	5
50/50 GUARD	3
INVERTED GUARD	1
CLOSED GUARD	1

SWEEPS (TYPE)

KISS OF THE DRAGON VARIATION	1
KNEE BAR USED TO SWEEP	1
50/50 HIP BUMP TO TOP	3
DE LA RIVA SCISSOR VARIATION	2
BERIMBOLO VARIATION TO TOP	2
FLOWER SWEEP	1

PASS (POSITION)

ON KNEES	0
HALF GUARD	1
STANDING	4

PASS (TYPE)

KNEE CUT	1
LONG STEP	3
LEG DRAG	1

SUBMISSION (POSITION)

OPEN GUARD	1
CLOSED GUARD	1
BACK	2
WHILE PASSING GUARD	1

SUBMISSION (TYPE)

ARMBAR	2
CHOKE	1
LEGLOCK / KNEEBAR	1
TRIANGLE	1

SUMMARY

SUCCESSES: DE LA RIVA SWEEPS & STANDING PASSES

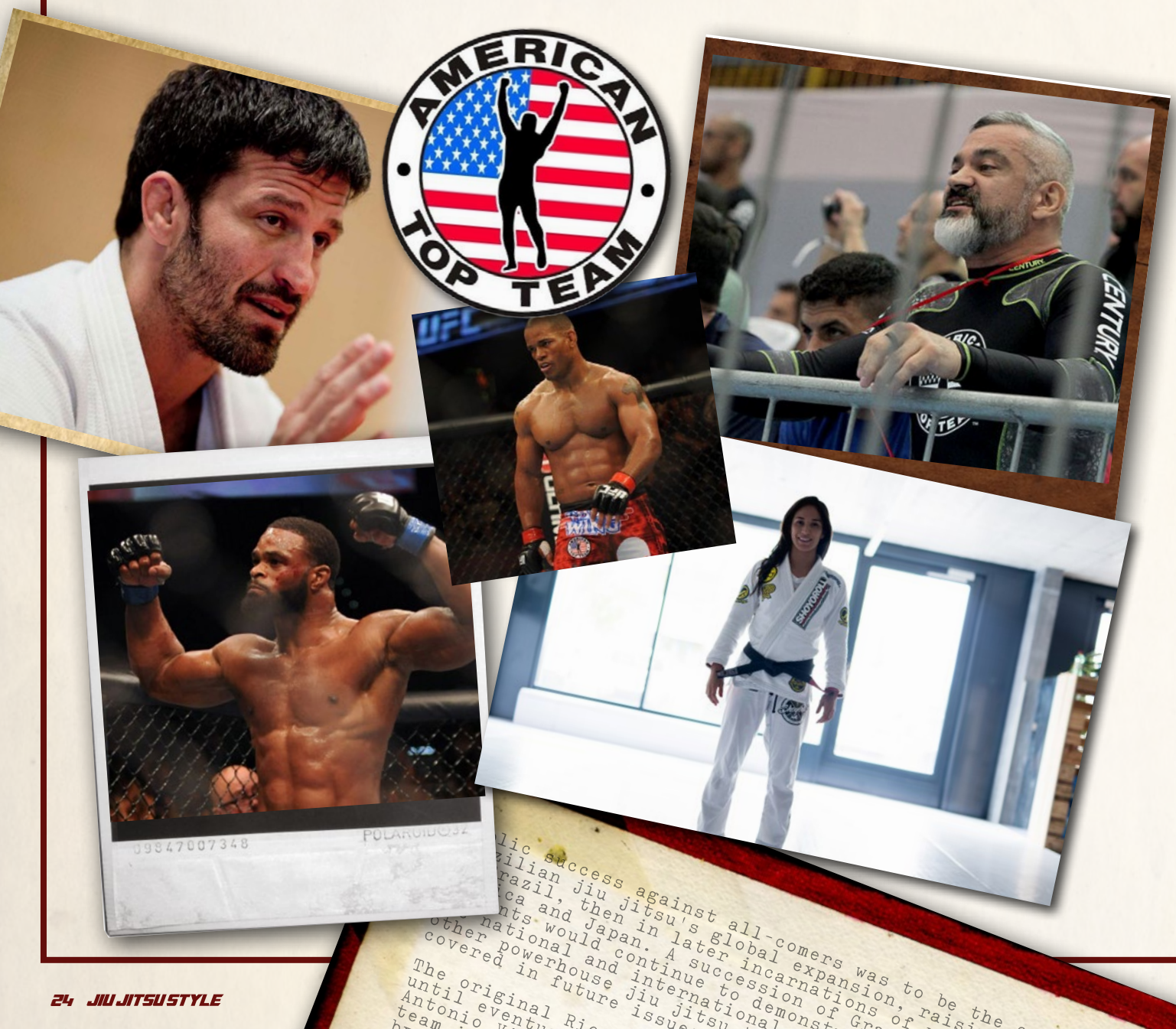
HISTORY 101:
AMERICAN TOP TEAM

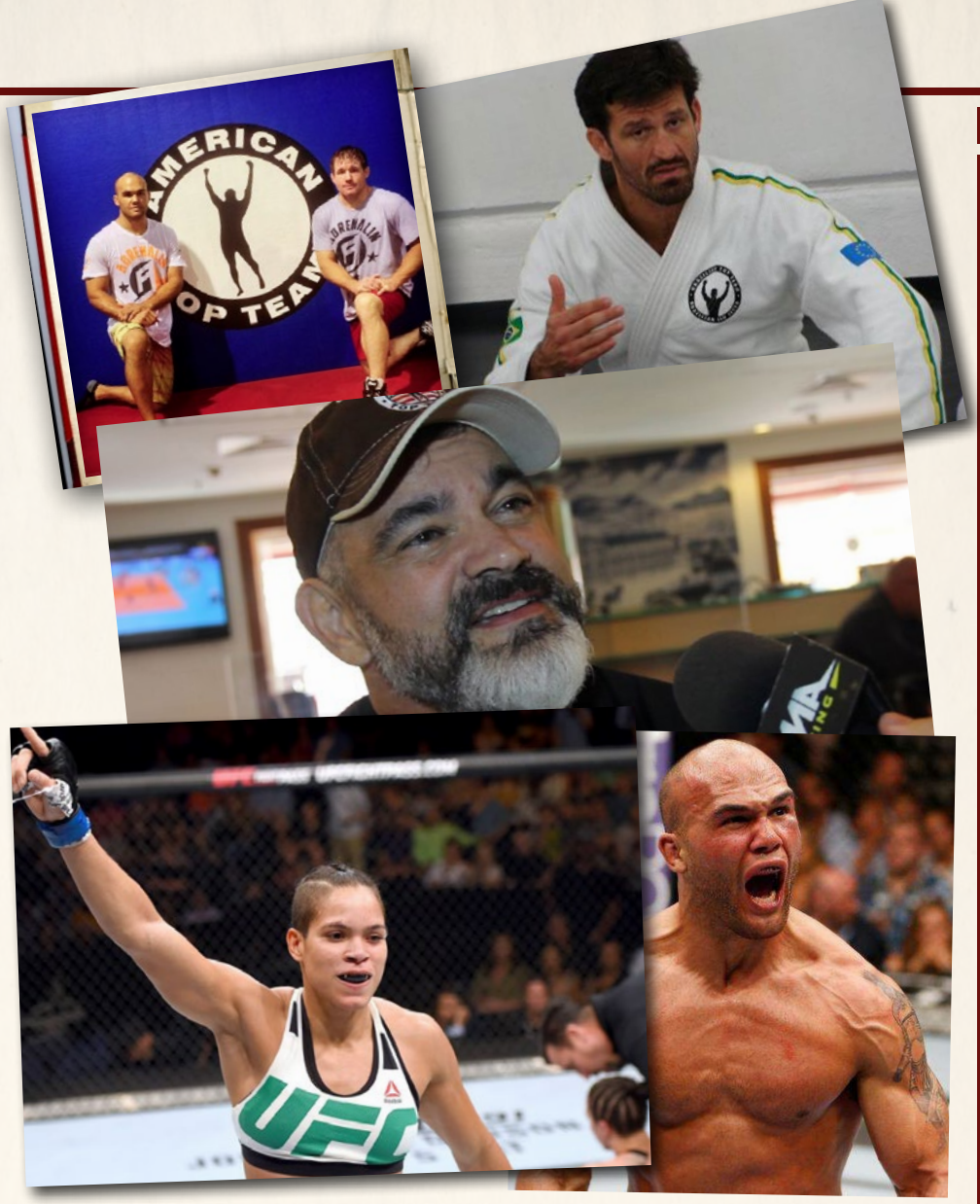
Ricardo Liborio was the first super heavyweight champion at the inaugural Mundials in 1996, fighting considerably heavier men. At the time, he was around 83kg, yet chose to compete in a division for athletes of 100kg and up. This was in order to address the one blemish on his record, a 1993 loss against the super heavyweight, Leonardo Castello Branco. Liborio went on to earn bronze and silver medals in the ADCC (in 1999 and 2000 respectively). He was born in 1967 in Rio de Janeiro, starting his martial arts journey with judo as a four-year-old. As a teenager, he walked onto the Carlson Gracie mats, back when the academy was shared with Carlson's brother, Rolls (who sadly died in a hang gliding accident a few months later). Liborio described it simply as "not a place to train easy."

In 2000, when Liborio was cornering Murilo Bustamante in Japan, he discovered both of them had been kicked out by Carlson due to a contractual dispute. They attempted to mend the relationship by flying to Chicago, but Carlson's mind was made up. This led Murilo and Liborio, along with several other exiles, to form Brazilian Top Team. Some time later, Liborio remembers how he "suggested to the group of guys there, let's open up the Top Teams. We'll go to a country, cheering for Brazilian Top Team in America, or Japan, or in Canada, or in Australia. So let's open up the Top Teams, use the same logo, the country's flag, and go from there. They said, 'No, let's concentrate on Brazilian Top Team, we're going to divide the brand.' I understood that, but I thought it was a good idea." In 2001, again while cornering a fighter in Japan, a promoter asked Liborio to remain in the country to teach fighters there for six months. Liborio was still considering a stint in Japan when Dan Lambert presented another proposal.

During the early '90s, pro-wrestling fan Dan Lambert was looking further afield than the USA. "I used to watch a lot of pro wrestling in Japan, and I used to tape trade with folks over there, and that's where the quasi-shoot promotions over there started in the early '90s like Pancrase and the UWF." Closer to home, the Ultimate Fighting Championship launched in 1993. Two years later, the rival Extreme Fighting promotion caught Lambert's attention, particularly its heavyweight champion, Conan Silveira. The muscular Brazilian ran a gym in Miami near where Lambert lived. "I said, 'I'm there'. So I went down to his gym and got my ass beat by some 15-year-old kid who weighed about 100 pounds less than I did my first day, and I said, 'I'm in!'"

Lambert's financial clout helped to build the team into a notable force in MMA. Several years later, he almost ended up buying the UFC when the original owners were struggling, but was outbid. His motivation had been the future of his team (many of whom looked to the UFC for their competitive prospects), which he was about to secure through another business deal. Lambert managed to convince Liborio to come to Florida in 2001. Liborio found that he liked it so much he wanted to stay permanently. He sold his 25% stake in Brazilian Top Team, ready to progress his idea of other Top Teams. The two men joined forces with Lambert's coach and Silveira's brother Marcelo, forming American Top





Team. As Lambert told Fox Sports, "once Liborio said he was going to stay, a bunch of his disciples decided to come up, so the floodgates opened up a little bit."

Among the many top BJJ and MMA prospects who have emerged from ATT is Gezary Matuda. She was born in 1983, not long after the young Liborio had begun training at the Carlson Gracie academy. Initially, her interest in martial arts was focused on striking, beginning with capoeira, after which she dedicated herself to muay thai. Her coach suggested she try grappling and Matuda joined Carlos Conceição's BJJ class in 2004, part of the Carlson Gracie lineage. Brazilian jiu jitsu would provide Matuda with the competition satisfaction she had never been able to glean from muay thai, despite repeatedly trying to get into the ring. Before she had spent a month on the mats, Matuda was entering BJJ tournaments. She stayed with Conceição up until purple belt, after which she moved to the States. ATT was her school of choice. It was there Matuda earned her brown and then black belt in 2012, having won the Worlds.

ATT has become a centre for elite MMA and BJJ fighters, but it has also built links to the local community. When Liborio's daughter, Bella, was a year and a half old, she was diagnosed with a genetic condition that resulted in the loss of her sight. The Liborio family were helped through that difficult time by the Lighthouse of Broward County, an organisation that provides support for the visually impaired. A teacher that Liborio met through the Lighthouse introduced him to one of her students, George Stern. Providing help with transport to the gym, Liborio trained Stern at ATT. His new student would become a state champion, competing against sighted opponents. Stern was not the only blind ATT athlete finding success in competition: he would be joined by Felipe Rodriguez, among others. Liborio went on to start an annual summer camp for visually impaired students, in an effort to continue giving back. To leave the last word to Liborio, discussing how the experience has impacted him personally:

"*Tremendously, that's definitely my way to give back, not just to the Lighthouse, but to the visually impaired community. I gain a lot, because just to have visually impaired people around is a great way to learn. […] I see barriers being broken all the time. They have way more to teach you than to learn from you.*"

TIMELINE

1967
Ricardo Liborio is born in July.

1996
Liborio wins the super heavyweight division at the first Mundials

2000
The Carlson Gracie team splits, Liborio founds Brazilian Top Team with some of his teammates

2001
Liborio accepts Dan Lambert's proposal to teach in Florida. The two found American Top Team a few months later

2012
Gezary Matuda becomes World Champion

SOURCES: • BJJHEROES.COM • AXS TV, INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE STERN • SUSAN CINGARI INTERVIEW WITH LIBORIO • DAMON MARTIN ON FOXSPORTS.COM • GIRL-JITSU.COM • GRAPPLING CENTRAL PODCAST

WORDS: CALLUM MEDCRAFT
PICTURES: ANDY DOUGLAS

FROM THE CHAMPION FACTORY: CHARLES NEGROMONTE

Ze Radiola is renowned for his ability to churn out elite level jiu jitsu fighters: Braulio Estima, Victor Estima, Otavio Sousa, Lucas Rocha and Bruno Alves all flourished under his guidance.

It was Ze who nurtured another young athlete, Charles Negromonte, as he began to learn his trade and evolve into one of the most talented black belts to arrive in Europe.

Upon arriving in the UK (by way of Poland), Negromonte quickly established himself as one of the Estima brothers' premier training partners; a role that would see his own game reach all-time highs. Exposure to the best athletes in the world – paired with Charles' exceptional work ethic – led to many notable accolades in recent years, topped by a World Nogi silver medal in 2016.

Fast forward to the present day and Negromonte is one of the head coaches at Roger Gracie Academy London. We caught up with the middleweight contender to discuss his journey so far and embracing the grind to achieve your goals.

Hi Charles! So, how and when did you start training jiu jitsu?
One of my friends, a guy called Orlando, nicknamed "big eyes", invited me to come and train, actually. He'd been doing jiu jitsu for around a year himself. I always enjoyed dedicating myself to sport so before jiu jitsu I tried many things, including skateboarding – I even competed a little bit as well. The one thing that was missing in all the sport I'd done before was a person who could show me how to get better and outline a path; if you do this, you're going to get better.

I arrived to train jiu jitsu at a very small club right by my house to start with, and it was affiliated to TT team actually. I was 15; I remember trying to use every ounce of my strength in that first class; it was super hard, but I knew I'd found exactly what I was looking for.

"GETTING BEATEN-UP EVERY DAY IS NOT EASY. I'VE PASSED THROUGH THE PROCESS OF BEING SMASHED BY BRAULIO ON THE MATS, JUST LIKE OTAVIO DID, JUST LIKE VICTOR DID"

At what point did you end up training with Ze Radiola?
So, I got my blue, purple and brown belts under my first instructor before moving to train with Ze. I'd finished high school at this point, so around 18 or 19 years old. I'd only stayed at each belt for about a year, but that was because I was competing a lot locally. Before my brown belt, I'd never done a big competition, but I was competing a lot.

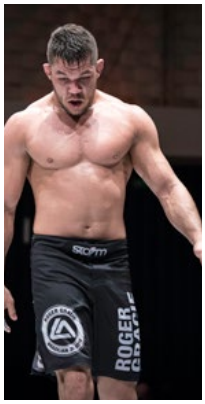
After finishing high school I looked at things: I could train jiu jitsu as a hobby and go to university, or take on jiu jitsu full time. So my decision was easy; I wanted to train full time, but the club didn't have IBJJF recognition for me to do the bigger tournaments. Ze Radiola's academy was two hours away from my house, but it was the obvious step for me. I used to see the guys like Otavio Sousa doing interviews on local TV after competitions, so that made me think even more about moving to train there. Actually, if you won international competitions then, the athletes would get sponsorship from the government as well, so that was a big incentive for me.

I spoke with my old professor and asked if he'd like to come with me to Ze's as well, because he also loved to train. He didn't agree with my decision too much, but I had to try Ze's academy because I wanted to be professional. Ze had lots of people show up like I did, trying to become professional, and he didn't always accept them, so I was lucky that Ze let me join the team.

How was your introduction to your new academy?
Man, Otavio (Sousa) beat me up really bad (laughs). I'd come from a new academy, so everyone went really hard on me until I was accepted. After a few months I felt myself improving, then after a year I felt like I was one of the tough guys at the academy.

You've now trained all over the world: Gracie Barra HQ, Gracie Barra Birmingham, Copacabana Gym in Poland, Roger Gracie Academy; what was special about Ze's gym in Recife?
I think it was just a special time because there was a big group of people who all shared the same goal of becoming a full time jiu jitsu fighter. Guys like me, Lucas Rocha, Bruno Alves and Otavio Sousa all wanted to focus on one thing - we didn't want to invest in any other part of our lives. Our energy was all spent on jiu jitsu and there was no second option in our head if that didn't work out, so training was

"It was just a special time because there was a big group of people who all shared the same goal of becoming a full time jiu jitsu fighter. Guys like me, Lucas Rocha, Bruno Alves and Otavio Sousa all wanted to focus on one thing - we didn't want to invest in any other part of our lives."



intense every single day on the mat. It was 100% effort every day, for four or five years, before people started to move away.

Once the likes of Otavio Sousa moved to the US, how did that affect your training?
Obviously the training level went down a little bit, but I was still very busy and was also teaching a little bit for Ze. This was important for me as well, because I wanted to know how to teach in the right way, like Ze. But, of course, when someone like Otavio or Bruno leaves the academy, it's a shame, because the training was amazing.

This must have been around the time you came to Europe then, Charles?
Yes, it was. So, after Braulio Estima won the ADCC 2009, he came back to Recife for a holiday and that's when I first met him. We trained; I did a few sweeps on him before he beat me up really bad (laughs). But, he must have been impressed, because he asked me to teach at one of his affiliations in Poland for a few months and after that I could go to the UK to stay with him. So, going straight to -20 degrees in Poland was my first experience in Europe!

This experience was so important for me: I grew up as a man, was travelling on my own, but also teaching at a busy academy like Copacabana was a big challenge. Every session there were around 40 people on the mat, who all wanted to train hard with me; plus I was still a brown belt.

We've personally seen your approach to teaching, and one thing we notice is that you always train in the sessions you take. Is that something you do consciously?
Everything that I teach, I want to be shown to work in positional sparring that very same day. So my goal in a session is to show a technique, then do that technique on a student in positional sparring with them knowing exactly what's about to come. I think this way it really proves the techniques are going to work if you give your effort and time to study them, you understand? I like to prove things work, and of course I like to train hard.

That's a great approach to teaching! So, to rewind slightly, how did you end up teaching in the UK?
After staying in Poland for three months, I went to stay with Braulio in the UK for another six months. I then had to return to Brazil for visa issues. In 2012 I came back to compete at the European championships, then go to stay with Braulio for six months to train again. After this trip, I ended up meeting my wife, Nina, so from there things started to change for me.

And you now find yourself teaching at the Roger Gracie Academy London; how did this come about?
Well, after meeting Nina, and continuing to come to the UK, I was getting more and more adjusted. Having these six-month trips, meeting new friends and learning the language all led me to feel more like my life was here. So, after Nina and I were married, I had my visa, and I was teaching at Braulio's academy. I wasn't the main instructor, so I was making just enough money to get by really.

I did this for two or three years, but at the weekends I would come down to London to see Nina and also train at Roger's academy. Roger knew I was coming down at the weekends to see Nina, and he also knew I wasn't able to train full time at Braulio's academy, so he asked Braulio first if it was ok if I could teach at the weekend in London. This carried on for six months before I ended up coming down to teach full time. Braulio helped me so much to come to the UK, so he completely understood the situation and that I should move to London so that I could teach more.

Let's talk about you as a fighter. Though you've started to become more recognised now, the likes of Otavio Sousa and Victor Estima were always pushing the pace in the middleweight division for Gracie Barra. Recently, you've hit a new level – do you feel like your best is yet to come?
I believe there's a lot more; my mind-set is solid and I know my day will come. Every year I get a step closer to achieving my goals and I always remain patient, not frustrated. I came close to the Nogi Worlds last year, took second, but I wasn't frustrated. I train with guys like Roger and Braulio, my training is as good as I could ask for, so I believe I am doing everything the right way. My focus is not really on winning medals; I focus on training the right way and putting in the best performances possible. That's the way I look at things.

Final question Charles: what's the difference between training with Braulio and Roger?
Getting beaten-up every day is not easy. I've passed through the process of being smashed by Braulio on the mats, just like Otavio did, just like Victor did - I know this made us all better fighters. It was so tough, but now I can help Braulio with good training and we both benefit. So, that was my experience with Braulio; having to pass through the process and deal with lots of mental challenges.

With Roger, it's the same thing, but I think he's much more intense in a way. With Braulio, I think I'm at a level now where I have time to think a little bit and try to play my game as much as possible, but with Roger you can't think. If you think, he's already one step ahead – and he never goes easy (laughs).

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RORION GRACIE

His life's journey has been a remarkable one, filled with contributions to the world of martial arts, and his legacy is undeniable. Not content to sit on his laurels, the 65-year-old Gracie family patriarch is on a mission to change the world once again, this time by focusing on the health and wellness benefits of his family's nutritional plan, The Gracie Diet. *Jiu Jitsu Style* sat down with Rorion to discuss his life and views. This is his story.

Humble Beginnings

Rorion Gracie is the eldest son of Helio Gracie. Born and raised in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, he grew up immersed in the world of jiu jitsu created by his father and uncle. At 17, Rorion decided to visit the U.S. for a month, but ended up staying for a whole year after having his ticket stolen and being too proud to ask for help. He was forced to panhandle and spent several days without shelter, but the experience was a "maturing" one that helped him realise that he had to come back to America to help grow his family's art.

Rorion noted of his first experience living in the States, "My trip was a very good one; it turned out to be a year long, but I went back to Brazil, went to law school and eventually, after graduating, returned to the U.S. with the idea of sharing jiu jitsu with the rest of the world. I came here with the objective of spreading something that had done so much for thousands upon thousands of people in Brazil. My family and so many other people saw the benefits of jiu jitsu, so I told myself I'm going back and share this with America."

Rorion's purpose for returning to the U.S. was set, but his method of achieving this goal was not in the least bit clear. He figured he'd arrive and play it by ear. A combination of luck, hard work, and knowing the right people enabled him to go from cleaning homes to working in the film industry. Rorion worked on movies and TV shows long enough to get settled and have enough put aside to focus completely on his mission of popularising his family's martial art in America.

He noted, "I had no plans for how I was going to make this happen when I returned to the U.S. in 1978. At first, I stayed with a friend whose mother was an actress. When she'd go work at the studio I would be alone all day so instead of being lazy I would clean the house, mow the lawn and cook dinner to show my appreciation for letting me stay there. I needed work so she helped me by putting me in contact with friends of hers that needed

WORDS: FELIX RODRIGUEZ
PICTURES: FLAVIO SCORSATO

"WE DEVELOPED THE CAGE BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT A BOXING RING. I'D SEEN ENOUGH FIGHTS WHERE IF THE ACTION WAS PRESSED, THE GUY THAT WAS LOSING WOULD USE THE ROPES TO GET AWAY"

their homes cleaned. Eventually I started cleaning for a lady that was married to the assistant director for a TV show called *Starsky and Hutch*.

"One day she said, 'Rorion, you're a good-looking guy, how come you're not in the movie business?' and I answered, 'Yeah, how come I'm not in the movie business?' She told me to get some pictures taken and that she'd ask her husband to take them to a casting office. I hung up my broom and started doing extra work in the movie business for the next 10 years! I was in most of the shows in the 1980s, from *Hill Street Blues* to *Fantasy Island* and doing that little bit of extra work allowed me to get started with my plan."

The Gracie Challenge comes to America

It's hard to imagine Rorion Gracie, the son of Helio Gracie, unarguably jiu jitsu royalty and someone who grew up in an upper middle class background, on his knees scrubbing the floors of someone else's home, but that's exactly what he did until the opportunity to work in show business presented itself. This new phase of his life began almost as modestly and humbly as the last and was equally challenging to get off the ground, because before there was a Gracie Academy there was just a Gracie Garage.

"I put some mats in my garage and I started teaching anybody I could, literally. If I met a guy buying a watermelon I'd invite him to a free class, the guy pumping my gas at the station as well, and slowly things started to happen. The first class was always on the house, then if you brought a friend you'd get another free class, then if you brought ten friends I'd give you ten free classes. That was my marketing back then."

While Rorion began teaching from his garage he revived a tradition started by his father and uncle to bring attention to the family's brand of grappling: The Gracie Challenge. The challenge was simple; the Gracies would take on all challengers, any place and any time, by testing their self-defense system against any martial art, for a generous cash prize. Rorion did the same in America, offering $100,000 to anyone who could defeat him in a no time limit, no holds-barred fight. The challenge at first glance can seem rather boorish and arrogant, but Rorion stresses that it was no such thing, rather a perfect example of people willing to put their money where their mouths were.

"When people started doing jiu jitsu in Brazil a lot of people thought the Gracies were very arrogant. Yeah, we would fight anybody at any time, but the last thing on my mind was to be arrogant. I had so much confidence in jiu jitsu when I came to America that I was willing to fight anybody so that I could prove this art was truly effective. I would fight anybody in my garage to get people to believe in the art, to earn its respect. My reason for giving out the Gracie Challenge in America when I was by myself challenging anybody for one hundred thousand dollars; I wasn't trying to tell everyone I was a badass by beating them all up, that wasn't it. I did it to show that I would jump in front of the train because I wasn't afraid, I believed in the art," noted Rorion.

As Rorion's student base grew, so did the number of people willing to take him up on the Gracie Challenge. Rorion happily took on all comers, but eventually realised that he needed a macro approach to spreading Gracie Jiu Jitsu and not the micro approach he'd been taking. "Things started expanding more and more, and one day one of my students came to me and said that his Kung Fu instructor thought jiu jitsu was a waste of time and that he wanted to challenge me to a fight. He then asked if I would accept and I said 'Of course, bring him in!'

"This was the first of many by the way, but the instructor would come, first Kung Fu, then Taekwondo, then wrestling; all sorts of styles would come, and we'd have 'No Holds Barred' matches in my garage. I would tell my students that 8:00pm on Tuesday, guys would show up [to fight me] and they would all pile up in my garage to

watch the fights. I did that hundreds of times in a 10-year span while teaching jiu jitsu out of my garage. One day it dawned on me that I couldn't convert people into believers of the art one at a time because the process would never end. That's when I had the idea to create the UFC."

The Greatest Infomercial of All Time

The UFC is the greatest infomercial of all time. Originally, it was a vehicle designed to prove that jiu jitsu was the most effective martial art available for a smaller opponent to overcome a bigger one. In Rorion's own words, "The UFC started from me teaching classes out of my garage and having people come over to test themselves against me after other martial arts instructors were offended when they found out students were learning jiu jitsu from me. Students would say they were learning grappling with a guy from Brazil and then their instructors would show up to fight me. That's how it all initiated.

"After hundreds and hundreds of those fights, I moved to a little school in Torrance, California where some of the fights got filmed and were released in the *Gracies in Action* series on DVD. People came over and over and my brothers and I showed them each time the effectiveness of our system against all different types of martial arts. One day, I said I can't do this anymore; I have to go think big. A friend of mine and student at the time, Art Davie, told me we should take this to television. We decided to do it and look for ways to put together a show.

"I invited another student, John Milius, who directed Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Conan the Barbarian*, to be the creative director and together we developed the octagon concept. I needed money to fund the UFC so I got together with a whole bunch of students, I put together a business plan, and then the guys came in, they put together the money and we created the company and then you saw what happened."

Getting the show off the ground was not a smooth process. Rorion encountered multiple challenges from inception to presentation. One of the biggest challenges was filling out the fight card with imposing fighters who looked like they would easily overpower his brother, Royce. He recalled, "Getting the right fighters was a challenge because we put out an ad and we had all these characters showing up. We had to go through a lot of people to find ones that would look really good on camera, that's how we ended up with Pat Smith, a really scary kickboxer from Colorado and Shamrock, who looked like a super hero.

"We had found all these different guys that looked good and then we had Royce as the contrast, who was the lightest guy in the tournament and beat everyone without having to throw a single punch. The strategy he used was brilliant, because he waited for them to tire out before using sound technique to overcome them. It worked to convince people of how effective the art was. That's what turned so many people on to the art, they saw Royce and thought if that little guy can do it then I can do it.

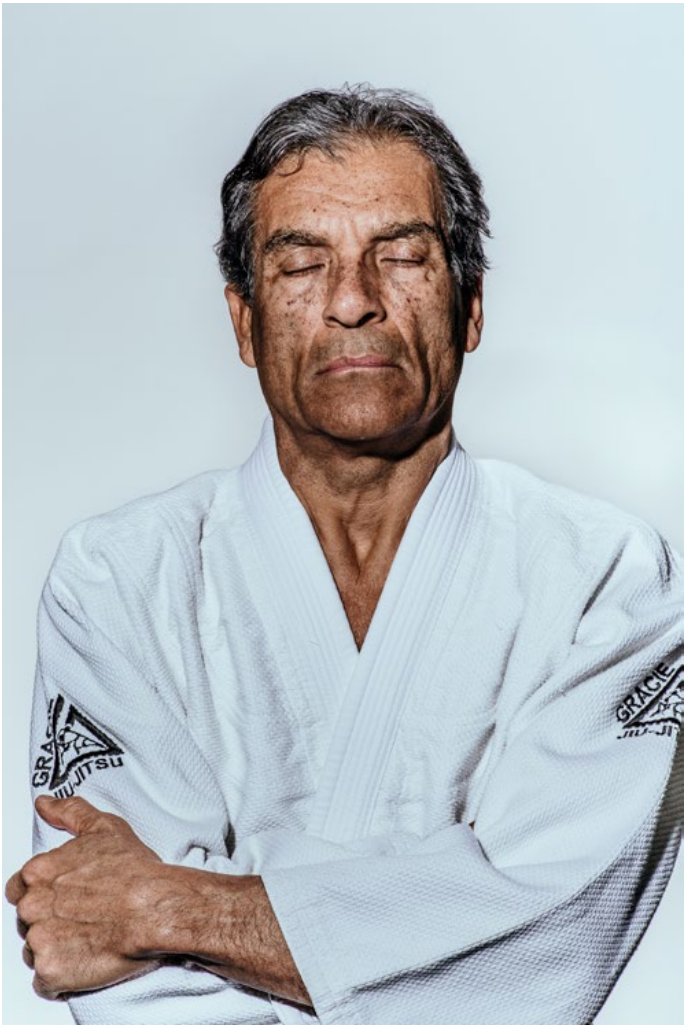
"I chose to go with Royce deliberately. It was my decision. People were calling me up, telling me I should put Rickson in because he is bigger and stronger, but I didn't want to put in Rickson because he was like a tank. He's an amazing fighter, he could have done the same thing if not better, but for the spectacle, it would have not been as impressive as Royce defeating everyone. From my point of view at the time, Royce would be a better example to show the effectiveness of the art because he looked like he didn't have a chance."

4 Billion Dollar Baby

Rorion had a plan; he'd secured funding and had a team to make it all happen, so he began hammering out the production details. Thankfully, he nixed ideas like having the fighters surrounded by a moat with alligators to emphasise that there is no running from the fight, and settled for an octagon instead. Rorion chose what has now become the UFC's iconic eight-sided cage as the arena for the fights because he wanted a platform where avoiding an opponent would be minimised. He saw the octagon as the best way to force the action.

"We developed the cage because I didn't want a boxing ring. I'd seen enough fights where if the action was pressed, the guy that was losing would use the ropes to get away. I didn't want that to happen, I wanted that door to lock and have two guys walk in and one guy walk out. The idea was that they could do anything they wanted with no limitations whatsoever except for eye gouging and biting. If you did one of those things we wouldn't interrupt the fight but we would fine the man at fault $1,000, which would go to their opponent. That was the rule, and it only got broken once. The fights happened no holds barred, no judges or time limits, and the fights went on and on and were very successful, as we all know," said Rorion.

Rorion and Art Davie owned a 50% stake in the UFC, and Bob Meyrowitz owned the other 50%. Meyrowitz had assured Rorion that if they could produce the show live he would find someone to air it. Rorion and his team raised the necessary funds to produce the show and it aired live from Colorado in the former arena for the NBA's Denver Nuggets. Finally, all the pieces fell into place and on November 12th 1993, *UFC 1* aired on pay per view. Needless to say, this was an incredible highlight in a lifetime of achievements for Rorion.

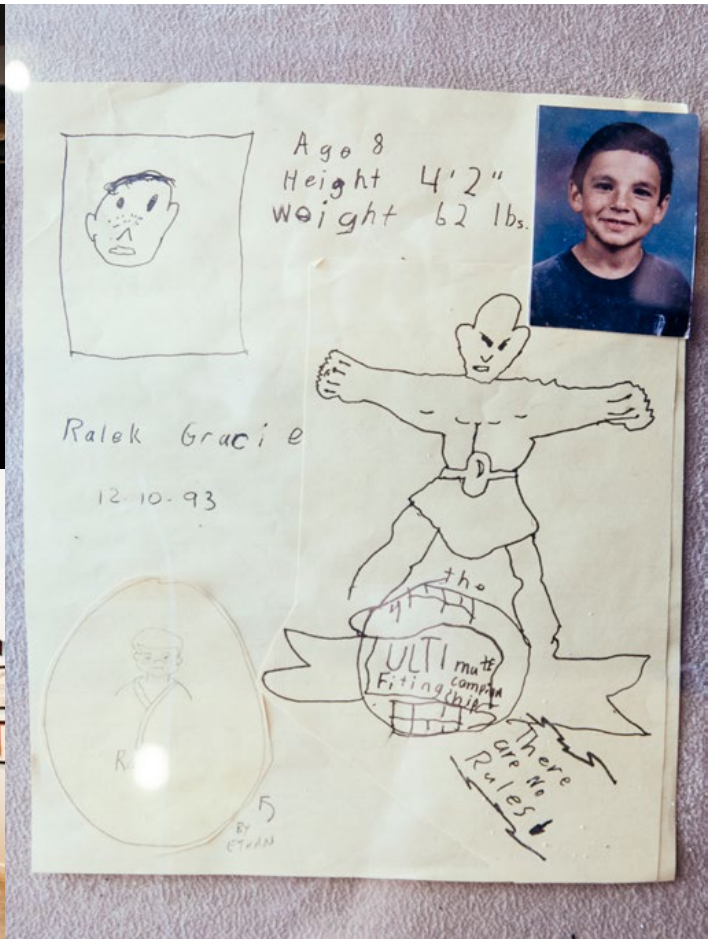


"I EVEN JOKED WITH (UFC PRESIDENT) DANA WHITE RECENTLY WHEN I TOLD HIM 'DANA, I FEEL LIKE I HAD A BABY, YOU ADOPTED IT, SENT IT TO WALL STREET AND NOW THE KID IS RUNNING THE WHOLE DAMN WORLD"

"I was so excited to get the show started, the day of the fights I went to take a shower and I still had my walkie talkie in my hand; had it not been for my wife at the time I would have probably showered with it. It was such a special time because I got to show the world what my family style was about, and I also had the opportunity to get the whole family together and have us all come out with Royce in the Gracie train, plus I was able to honour my father, recognising him as the first Ultimate Fighter by presenting him with a plaque during the fights."

Rorion and his team scraped together the funding necessary to put on the first show. There were a lot of expectations and a lot of money on the line, hinged on the broadcast's success. If *UFC 1* sold 40,000 pay per views they would have felt like it was a huge success, so they were ecstatic when sales totaled 85,000. *UFC 1* was a smashing success, and it opened the door for Rorion to make another tremendous contribution to the martial arts. "That first UFC also sparked the interest of the U.S. Army in jiu jitsu and led to them adopting the Gracie Combatives system as their official hand-to-hand combat program for the last 25 years," said Rorion.

The team felt that for the second go around repeating 85,000 in sales would reassure them that the UFC was sustainable and not just a one-off. Again, their expectations were blown out of the water when *UFC 2* sold 120,000 PPVs. Rorion and his team were delighted to see even more growth in sales for *UFC 3*, and moved forward with a fourth event. *UFC 4* was the turning point, where circumstances on the production side led to tweaking the format.



"I INVITED ANOTHER STUDENT, JOHN MILIUS, WHO DIRECTED ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER IN CONAN THE BARBARIAN, TO BE THE CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND TOGETHER WE DEVELOPED THE OCTAGON CONCEPT"

These small tweaks slowly evolved into the unified rules of MMA, which was good, because that first UFC event managed to morph into a budding sport that is practised all over the world, but was bad for Rorion's vision of showing the efficacy of jiu jitsu.

"At *UFC 4* Royce fought Dan Severn; the man was a bear. Our pay per view was slotted for two hours on the nose. Our first three events went the two hours even though we didn't have time limits on the fights, but Royce and Dan went over the limit by three minutes," said Rorion. The fight was stopped at 15:49, so viewers at home were cut off from the last three minutes of the fight and didn't get to see Royce submit Severn via triangle choke. Naturally, when word got around of how the fight ended, people were enraged.

He noted of *UFC 4*'s aftermath, "Talk about a nightmare! The satellite transmission was interrupted at exactly two hours and a freaking revolution almost went on. It was the biggest mishap in PPV history. I mean people got fired; it was a mess, and we lost a lot of money because we had to refund the viewers, re-air the show for free, send videos. It was a catastrophe, and I was right in the middle of it."

Although the production mishap resulted in large financial losses for Rorion, it did have one positive outcome because it got people talking about the fights - at first out of frustration in being deprived of the outcome, then explaining what it was they were watching. Word about "UFC fighting" started getting around. The mishap inadvertently triggered a grassroots campaign for the UFC to grow in popularity. Rorion recognised this and noted, "That type of publicity, money cannot buy. Once again, all bad things happen for a good reason."

Cashing Out With No Regrets

Rorion had come up with the funding for the first UFC, but Bob Meyrowitz's BMG subsidiary financed the subsequent three events. Meyrowitz would pay off BMG for costs and then his production company and Rorion's would split the remaining profits. This was good because Rorion incurred little to no financial risk, unless something like *UFC 4* happened, but was also bad because he relinquished creative control. For UFC *5*, Meyrowitz decided that time limits would be necessary in order to avoid going over the allotted airtime once again. This made sense from a production standpoint to Rorion, but he also felt that by giving way to production needs he went from broadcasting real fights to showing a less realistic product.

He noted, "I was concerned about the integrity of the fight itself. [Meyrowitz] was seeing things from a TV show about fighting perspective. I was trying to show real fights, so we had different angles. For me the most important thing was don't touch them, don't interrupt, just let them fight until one guy knocks the other one out. That was my point of view. They wanted a five-minute round so they could plan around and do the program inside the two-hour air limit."

Rorion understood the need, but no longer wanted to be a part of the UFC because it had outlived its usefulness to him. He recalled his decision to walk away from fight promoting. "Creating the UFC was a platform for educational purposes, and to have different martial arts style compete against one another, so that viewers at home could decide what style worked and what styles didn't work. I wanted people watching at home to see that jiu jitsu would win and for them to decide to take up training or put their kids in classes."

Rorion feels that time limits negatively affected fight strategy for smaller opponents. "When Meyrowitz added time limits, he took the little guy's ability to fight the big guy away, because putting time limits means that by the time the big guy gets tired time is running out, and the little guy can't capitalise. Now, David cannot beat Goliath, so five minutes isn't a reasonable time to display the effectiveness of jiu jitsu," said Gracie.

Adding time limits mandated the need for judges as well because if fights went the limit they would be ruled as draws without proper scoring. Rorion felt that judging added a layer of subjectivity, where a fighter who could have created his own outcome would have someone else decide whether they had won a fight or not because they went over the time limit. Then along came weight divisions. All of a sudden Rorion's jiu jitsu infomercial had morphed into a purely entertainment piece in which the best man might NOT win! When spectacle and production took away from the essence of real street fighting he decided to sell his half of the UFC to Bob Meyrowitz.

Despite the UFC being recently sold for $4 billion, he is adamant about not regretting selling his interest in the promotion when he did. "I was extremely proud of having an idea that became a concept worth $4 billion. I'm happy that I was the one with the inspiration and the drive to have started all that. I even joked with [UFC president] Dana White recently when I told him 'Dana, I feel like I had a baby, you adopted it, sent it to Wall Street and now the kid is running the whole damn world. I took [the UFC] as far as I could with my resources, I couldn't have done what the Fertitta brothers did for the UFC, so I'm just happy to know that I created the fastest growing sport in the world," said Rorion.

The Gracie Diet's Evangelist

The next chapter of Rorion's life is dedicated to health and wellness more so than self-defense. His passion is now the Gracie Diet. "My uncle Carlos developed a diet based on food combining concepts and I wrote a book about it [*The Gracie Diet*] which has been very successful, and that is what I find my calling to be today. That is now my mission in life. I want to educate the masses about the unprecedented and proven benefits of the Gracie Diet." Rorion describes the Gracie Diet as being proactive, instead of reactive. He believes that we treat ailments like headaches and heartburn reactively and topically through the use of medicine. He sees the Gracie Diet as a proactive way of treating these ailments, because combing the right foods keep the body healthy enough to eliminate their root causes.

He noted, "I'm on a mission, bro. I'm trying to change the world again. The Gracie Diet keeps your body alkaline and away from acidity. There are divergent opinions on what brings alkalinity into our system, but I believe that combining the right foods together and spacing meals properly between each other is the best way to keep the body alkaline. My goal is to change people's perception of food. You can't just eat because it tastes good. That said, I love what I eat, I don't sacrifice the taste of my food at all. The difference is, my pleasure in eating is both in the taste and how food makes me feel."

Rorion believes that we often feel bloated after eating meals followed by elaborate desserts because we are combining the wrong food groups. He also believes that by not pairing the right foods with each other we can delay digestion and impede on maximising the benefits of each food's nutrients, and the rise in consumption of junk food and soda are only adding health problems and creating a world where obesity is an increasingly common thing. He believes that his family's diet is the answer. For more detailed information on how it works check out *The Gracie Diet* book, or visit *www.graciediet.com*

Rorion's goal is to promote the Gracie Diet with the same level of success he had in promoting Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, if not more. That has been his life's calling since leaving MMA. "Once I was done [with the UFC] I said to myself, 'Now what? I'm not gonna retire yet, I'm too young.' Then one day I was lying in bed, my epiphanies usually come around early morning when the kids are sleeping, so I had one. I realised we didn't come to America to teach people how to fight; we came here to teach people how to live better. That's the message.

"So, what I did is I wrote a book based on the 65 years of research that my uncle Carlos [Gracie], my dad's older brother, did on food combining that kept my family healthy. This research was the real secret of the success of the Gracie family; it's not the jiu jitsu, it's the health. I wrote *The Gracie Diet* five years ago. My challenge has been, how to get people that are not accustomed to this to implement the diet, because changing habits is one of the most difficult things to do. People who start to implement it often get confused, they get frustrated and then they quit."

To keep people motivated and following the diet, he has borrowed from jiu jitsu and implemented a belt system designed to gradually reduce bad habits, and condition people to eat healthy by combining the right foods. He noted, "Keeping people on the diet without quitting is my challenge. I've been scratching my head trying to figure out a way to give people a formula to stay on track. I think I've cracked the code."

Rorion's formula takes people from white to black belt in "eating right" in 8 weeks. The system works by introducing subtle changes in our food choices and eating routines that aim to wean out bad habits and food choices over time. He is a fervent believer in his uncle's diet and sees his efforts in promoting a healthier lifestyle as even more important than his contributions towards bringing jiu jitsu into the mainstream.

Rorion is the first to admit that there are many "divergent opinions" on the effectiveness of an alkaline diet, but he urges non-believers to try it out and see for themselves. He has also offered to make himself available via social media to guide anyone with questions, so feel free to reach out on Facebook. Rorion's passion for the diet is palpable and he believes in it wholeheartedly. He sees the effects of his family's nutritional plan as greater than the benefits of his family's self-defense system.

"Everything I've done over the past 40 years in jiu jitsu and for MMA is nothing. That was just the appetizer. I've just created a platform of credibility for this next phase of my life where the real work begins. I am dedicated to sharing the concepts for a healthy lifestyle based on the Gracie Diet. I am more committed to the cause of the diet today than I was when I came to America 40 years ago to promote jiu jitsu. I believe in this so much that if I had to choose between being a 9th degree red belt, everything I know in terms of jiu jitsu, or my diet, I would choose the diet in a heartbeat. I'd rather delete everything I know about jiu jitsu than change my eating habits," said Rorion.

That's a radical statement to make by one of the biggest contributors to Brazilian Jiu Jitsu's popularisation. He's silenced the naysayers before: who knows, maybe he'll do it again?

"I AM DEDICATED TO SHARING THE CONCEPTS FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE BASED ON THE GRACIE DIET. I AM MORE COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE OF THE DIET TODAY THAN I WAS WHEN I CAME TO AMERICA 40 YEARS AGO TO PROMOTE JIU JITSU"

JOAO GABRIEL ROCHA

CLOSER BY THE DAY

THE GRACIE FAMILY ASIDE, FEW JIU JITSU ATHLETES CAN'T REMEMBER WHEN THEY STARTED TRAINING. FOR JOAO GABRIEL ROCHA, LIFE WAS FORGED ON THE MAT AS SOON AS HE COULD (JUST ABOUT) WALK, AND WAS PROBABLY STILL WEARING NAPPIES.

WORDS: CALLUM MEDCRAFT PICTURES: GAMENESS FIGHTWEAR

THOUGH NO DOUBT A FAMILIAR NAME with hard-core BJJ aficionados, Rocha is not the first who comes to mind when thinking of elite ultra heavyweights. Checkmat's Marcus Buchecha Almeida may be the man to beat, but Soul Fighter's Rocha is hot on his tail - and getting closer by the day.

Growing up in Tijuca - a neighbourhood in the northern zone of Rio de Janeiro famed for hosting the IBJJF Worlds before transferring to the USA - Joao seemed destined to embark on a jiu jitsu journey.

"I don't remember when I started, because I was so young," says Joao. "I think I was on vacation, it was summer time, and it was one of those camps where you do different sports every day. Francisco Mansor, from Kioto Academy, was teaching jiu jitsu one of the days on this camp at Tijuca Tennis Club. I was just two and a half years old, so, very young. I don't remember my first years of training at all."

An early introduction to jiu jitsu kick-started a love affair for Rocha, who soon realised the gentle art was to form a focal point in his life. His talent was recognised early, which led to his family (and selflessly, his coaches) seeking out the best training possible.

"I was a big kid, so even then, I didn't have the best training at Kioto when I was younger," explains Joao. "Luckily, my coach told me to go and train with Rafael "Formiga" and Leandro "Tatu" while they were still with Brazilian Top Team. This was all before Soul Fighters was formed."

Soul Fighters was the brainchild of Kioto Academy's Francisco Mansur, his students, Tanquinho and Tanque, plus American Top Team's Rafael "Formiga" and Leandro "Tatu". It was under this new, unified team that Joao Gabriel Rocha was to flourish, having made the tough decision to focus all his energy on becoming a jiu jitsu fighter.

JOAO GABRIEL ROCHA

"So, when I was 15 I thought about taking jiu jitsu seriously," Joao reflects. "I won my first Worlds – and I really liked it (laughs). It was a great feeling, so after the competition I spoke to my father about following this path and not following education.

"My father was so, so supportive; my whole life, my family have been just amazing in helping me follow this path. I mean, I did not have a driver's licence until I was 18 years old, so before this my father was like my taxi driver; driving me to the gyms, the competitions and anywhere we needed to go. He paid for me to have private classes with the teachers as well. I know that without the support of my family, I would not be here now."

Living and training in Tijuca, Joao was right in the middle of a hotbed of jiu jitsu. As well as competing from an early age, he was also a keen spectator, and watching the best athletes in Brazil fight for world titles proved to be the ideal motivation.

"In 2006, my father and I were at the Worlds at Tijuca Tennis Club," says Joao when reflecting on his childhood. "I remember it so well, as it was the year Xande Ribeiro beat Roger Gracie. It was special, because before fighting Xande, Roger had submitted everyone easily, including Marcelo Garcia inside three minutes. Xande, on the other hand, went through many battles before reaching the final, so watching Xande beat Roger in the final was such an amazing motivation. Xande caught Roger with a late seoi-nage, and it was because of seeing that I started to train seoi-nage (laughs)."

Soul Fighters continued to provide the ideal environment for Rocha, who consistently turned heads whenever he was on the mats. In fact - such was his prowess at the lower belts - he went on what is arguably one of the longest unbeaten runs we've ever heard of.

"I actually went 10 years without losing," beams Joao. "It was at the ADCC trials, maybe 12 years ago now, that I finally lost. It was crazy actually, because in that bracket you had me, Buchecha and Rodolfo Vieira, but no-one had really heard of us back then. Anyway, I beat four black belts that day, including the guy who beat Buchecha. I was still a blue belt back then."

Joao's stature as a fighter grew as he advanced through the ranks, with his 2012 run on the brown belt scene proving to be his most successful to date. Having picked up gold at the Pan Ams, the Brazilian Nationals and double gold at the Worlds, there was no better time to enter the elite stage and chase the ultimate goal: a black belt world title.

In a cruel twist of fate, Joao would be forced to wait before battling for more titles. First, he would have to battle cancer.

"I didn't know what was happening in the beginning," says Joao on his illness. "My parents actually decided to hide it from me, so it was only once I had an operation and was told about the chemotherapy that I realised what was happening. The whole process took around five months: four months of chemotherapy, then maybe one month after that of no training, before I started to get back to normal."

Having recovered from his cancer and completed the basic rehabilitation, it was a case of 'back to square one'. Battling something as traumatic as cancer, you could have forgiven Rocha for resting on his laurels, or even quitting jiu jitsu altogether. Though the road to competition was set to be the challenge of a lifetime, with no guarantee of success, Joao took it all in his stride.

"It was really tough, and once the treatment was finished, it felt like being a white belt again," said Joao. "My whole life I had been used to training jiu jitsu; training hard, to a high level, you know? After cancer, it was like starting all over again, so it was one of my hardest challenges. After one month of training post cancer, I wasn't anywhere back to normal but I was making progress. I was like a purple belt (laughs). I think my body is very good at recovering quickly. My doctor said that I should be out for longer than I was before recovering.

"I have to be honest and say I was scared I wouldn't recover my jiu jitsu after the cancer, but I'm a stubborn guy; I believed working hard would get me back on track for my goals. It's not always good to be stubborn, but it this instance, it was a good way to be."

Getting back to normal was a source of comfort for Joao, but he is also a man who cannot settle for 'normal'. Health restored, and with fire in his belly, it was time to get back in action: time to chase down his dreams.

"My first tournament back was terrible," says Joao in between busts of laughter. "I did win my first fight, but only just; it was by, like, one advantage. No disrespect to my opponent either, but he was not a very well known black belt.

"In the quarter final, I was up by two points against Luiz Panza, then I got caught in a footlock that felt like it broke my foot. That was only the second time I'd been submitted in competition; the first time I'd been submitted was against Rodolfo Vieira, then this second time was against Luiz Panza in my first tournament after the cancer.

"I guess I was a little crazy, because I had been training for about six weeks after the cancer before entering this competition. Also, I didn't want to start with a small competition, I wanted to feel the environment of the big event; it was more important for me to be back on the stage I missed, not what medal I took home that day."

Fast-forward to the present day, and Joao has his mojo back. Though the elusive gold medal is yet to be found, he's emerged as the most likely ultra-heavyweight to de-throne Buchecha, having continued to improve on his performances whenever they've fought at either ADCC or IBJJF events.

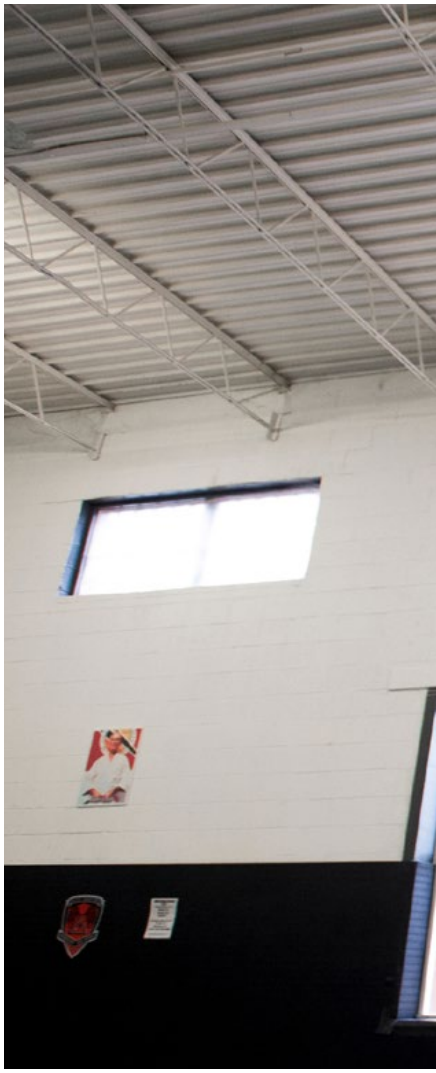
"I think that every day I get a little bit closer to reaching my goals," says Joao when questioned on Buchecha's dominance. "He's been champion for a long time now and I feel things could be changing; last year I gave him a tough fight, so I keep working harder and harder to get to where I want to be.

"You know, I talk about Buchecha, but my focus is on me; making sure my preparation is how it should be. If you focus on others, I think that's the way you lose focus – know what I mean?"

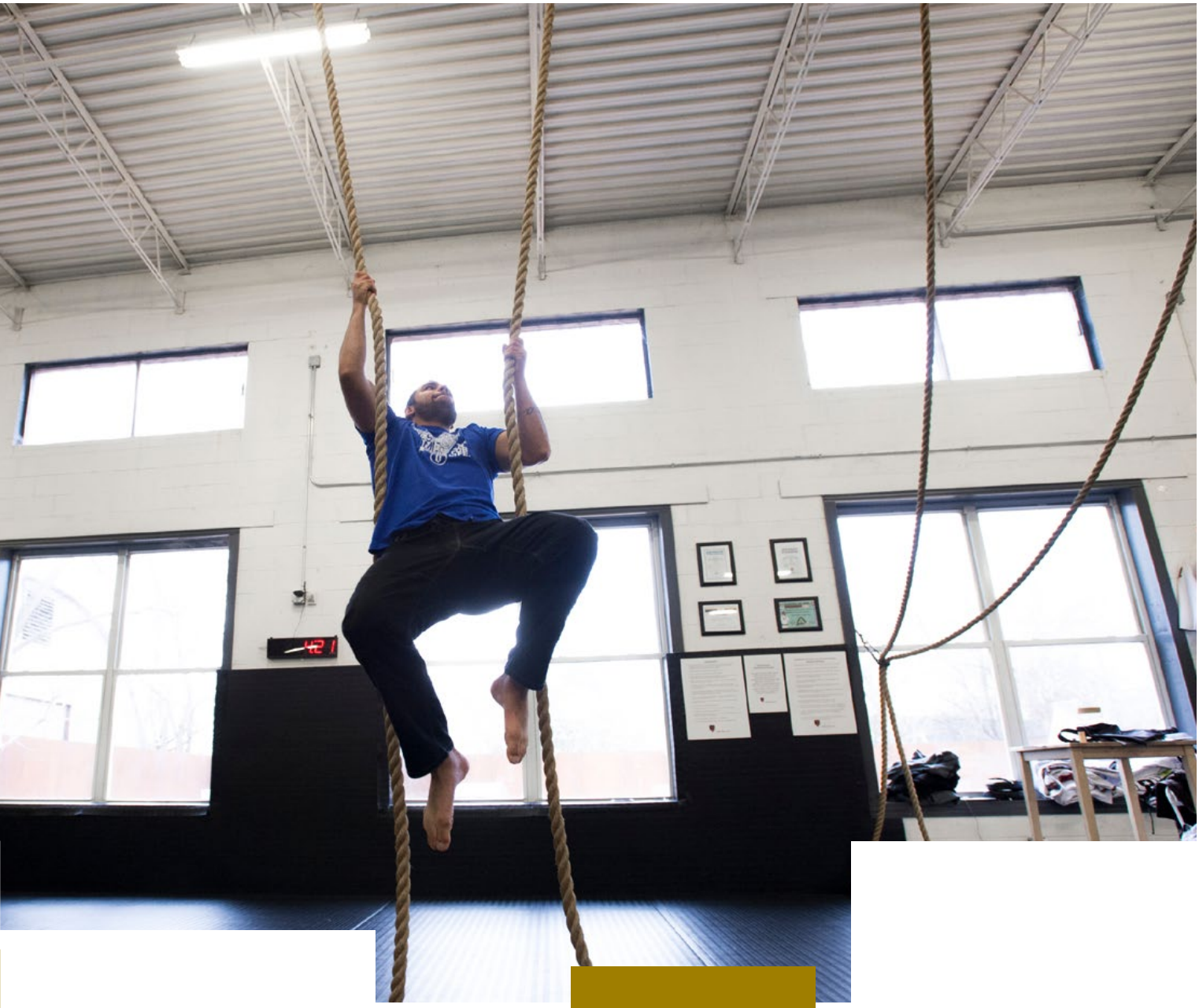
And he really is leaving no stone unturned. 2016 saw Joao make the tough decision to relocate from his native Brazil, leaving behind the life of acai on the beach to embrace the grind in the USA. He trains, he eats, he sleeps; he does nothing else.

"My life in the USA is much more professional," explains Joao. "In Brazil, maybe people talk, relax a bit, and then start training. Here in America, I focus just on training and on being the best I can be with no distractions at all. I have better food, better supplements and basically the higher level of support that I need to reach my goals.

"I never really take time off, man. People focus on a compe-



"I FACED A BIG PROBLEM IN MY LIFE, MY CANCER, SO BEATING THAT HAS GIVEN ME THE CONFIDENCE THAT I CAN DO ANYTHING; I CAN BE THE CHAMPION"



tition a few months beforehand; I start earlier than that. I don't teach classes, I don't focus on anything other than my life as a competitor."

And it is as a competitor that Rocha really starts to shine. Much like his arch rival, Buchecha, the word 'stall' doesn't exist in his vocabulary, with every minute of every match clearly geared towards one goal: position, then submission. Joao has great stand up (in particular his drop seoi-nage), a dynamic guard, athleticism and – as his story clearly illustrates – heart. Be it 10 minutes in the IBJJF arena, a potential 20 minutes at the ADCC, or on a super-fight stage, Joao Gabriel Rocha is exciting to watch - period.

"Maybe I'm not always fighting smart," says Joao on his electrifying fighting style. "In my first Worlds at a black belt I was beating Bernardo Faria with two minutes to go, but he wasn't moving at all. I took a risk to keep the fight progressing, and that ended up with me losing the match. It's in my nature to try and progress; to try and win a fight well. My patience is not great (laughs).

"I guess people may not like the style of guys like the Miyao brothers, but they fight to the same rules as everyone else; guys like Rodolfo Vieira. The only thing I would say is that we don't want to see blue belts fighting hard for two points, then stopping to protect a lead. The top black belts, the best guys, I don't believe fight like this, but maybe referees could be stricter to prevent stalling."

If his previous rate of progress is anything to go by, then 2017 is set to be a big year for Joao. The ADCC finals will be held in Finland, and the man from Soul Fighters will be there, trying to better his silver medal from Beijing in 2013.

"I NEVER REALLY TAKE TIME OFF, MAN. PEOPLE FOCUS ON A COMPETITION A FEW MONTHS BEFOREHAND; I START EARLIER THAN THAT"

"The ADCC is a special tournament, for sure," explains Rocha. "My first ADCC in Beijing is a moment I remember very well. Heading back to my hotel after reaching the final in China, just six months after getting my black belt, that was a very cool moment for me.

"That said, winning the Worlds as a black belt has been my dream all my life. That is the most important thing I could ask for. Don't get me wrong, to win the ADCC would be amazing, but that's because it's a great competition and has nothing to do with the money. I will be in Finland to compete and do my best there as well."

The mere mention of the words *black belt world champion* brings a smile to Joao's face; what the title would mean to him couldn't be clearer. Though battling back from cancer is his most notable victory to date, we're sure his most coveted victory is yet to come.

"I faced a big problem in my life, my cancer, so beating that has given me the confidence that I can do anything; I can be the champion," says Joao in closing. "Every year I get better, and I am now in the best shape of my life, so I just think it's a matter of time for me."

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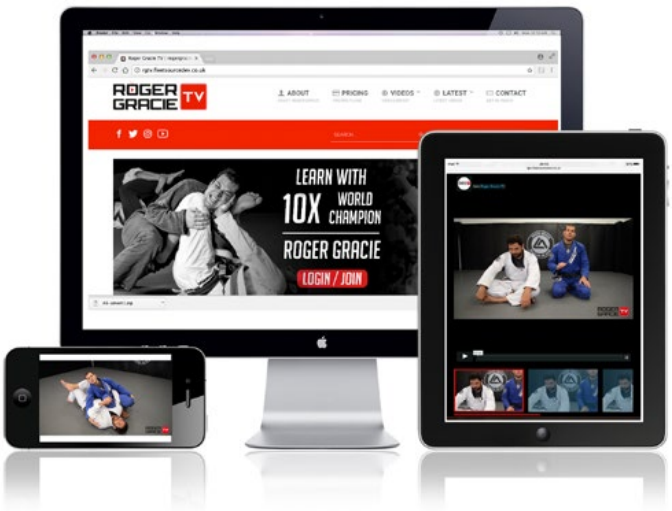

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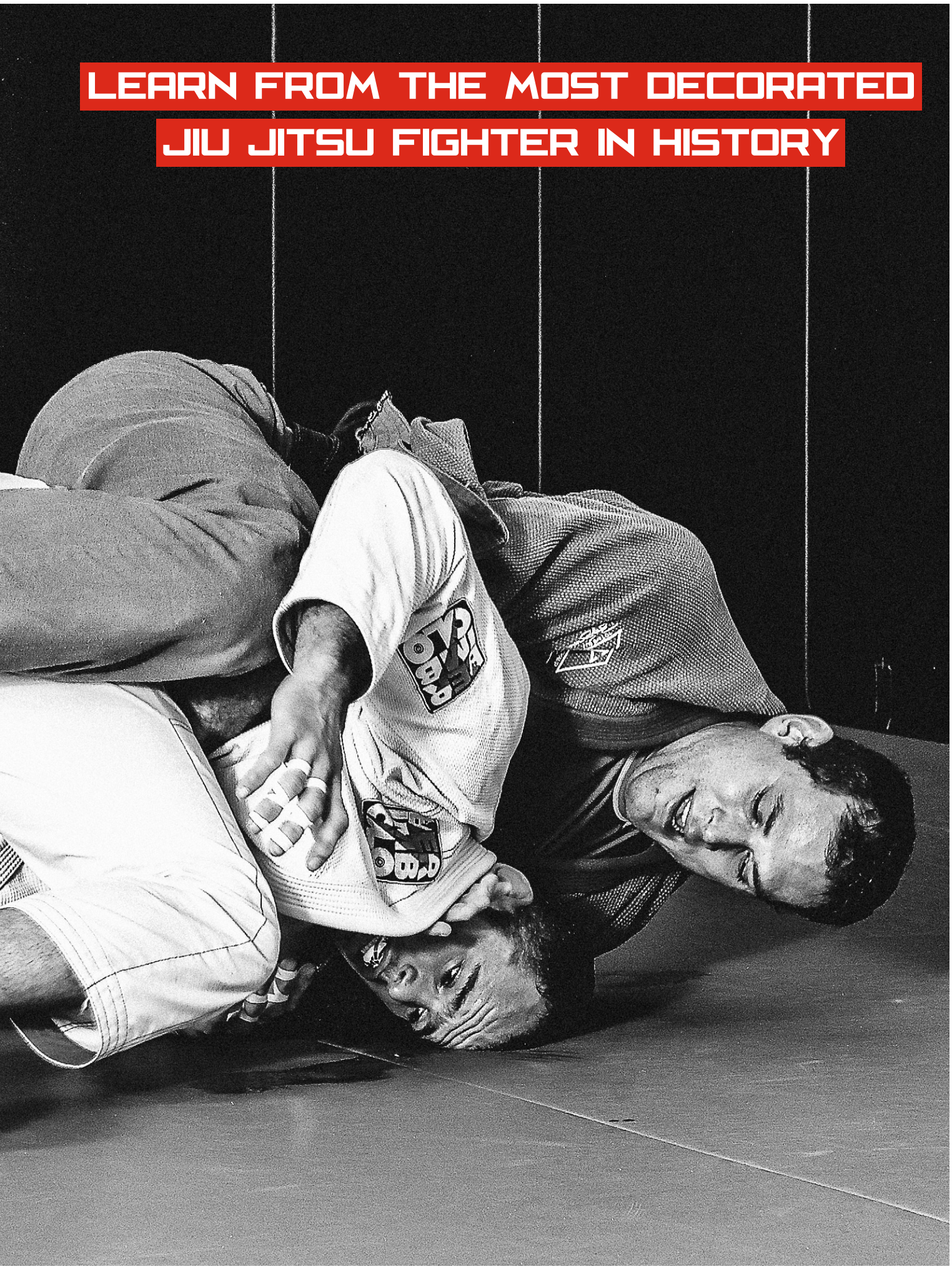


THE CALM & THE STORM

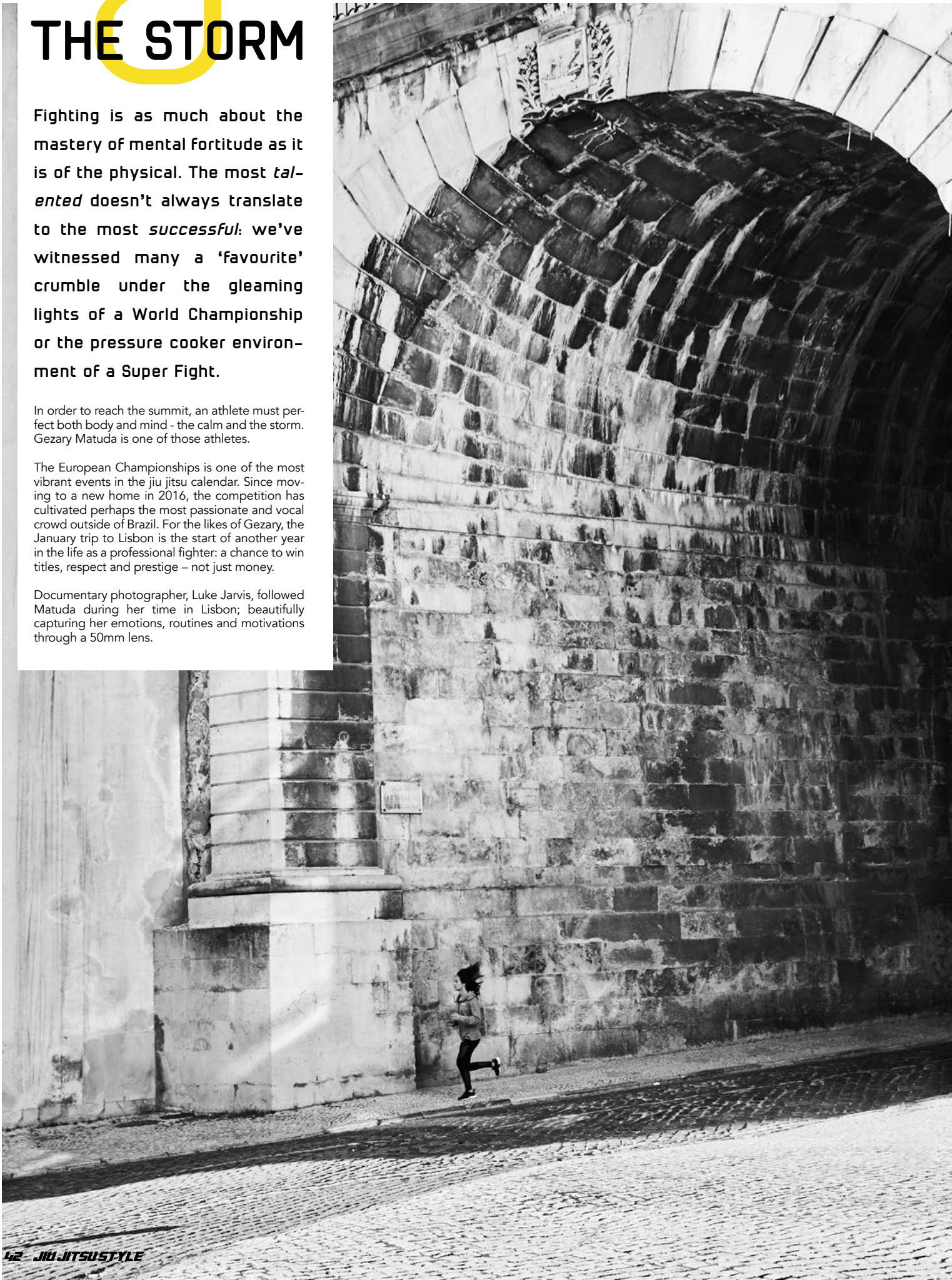
TWENTY-FOUR HOURS WITH GEZARY MATUDA PHOTO ESSAY: **LUKE JARVIS**

Fighting is as much about the mastery of mental fortitude as it is of the physical. The most *talented* doesn't always translate to the most *successful*: we've witnessed many a 'favourite' crumble under the gleaming lights of a World Championship or the pressure cooker environment of a Super Fight.

In order to reach the summit, an athlete must perfect both body and mind - the calm and the storm. Gezary Matuda is one of those athletes.

The European Championships is one of the most vibrant events in the jiu jitsu calendar. Since moving to a new home in 2016, the competition has cultivated perhaps the most passionate and vocal crowd outside of Brazil. For the likes of Gezary, the January trip to Lisbon is the start of another year in the life as a professional fighter: a chance to win titles, respect and prestige – not just money.

Documentary photographer, Luke Jarvis, followed Matuda during her time in Lisbon; beautifully capturing her emotions, routines and motivations through a 50mm lens.



ANNOTATIONS 1/2. The night before the competition; Gezary is at her hotel, watching her weight and getting mentally prepared. **3.** There's time for one last training session before doing battle the following day. **4.** Rest is required if she's going to be at her best.

ANNOTATIONS 5. It's the morning of competition and time to shine. **6/7.** After a light breakfast, Gezary has a little time to relax and check out her social media before heading to the venue.

ANNOTATIONS 8. Once at the venue, Gezary takes her time to stretch, clear her mind and make sure her body is ready for the challenge. **9.** One last embrace from her coach before heading through to the bullpen. **10.** Though it's time for business, Gezary has time to catch up with friends. **11.** All weighed-in and ready for action.

ANNOTATIONS 12/13. In the zone; one last moment to compose herself. **14.** Once on the mat, it's Gezary's time to shine, and she makes short work of her opponents in Lisbon.

15/16. The moment of elation after a solid job done. All the days, months and years of sacrifice; they all come down to these moments of victory. **17.** When the smoke clears, it's time to head home as the champion. There was no money on the table, only titles, but that's all that matters for Gezary Matuda.

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WORDS: ARUN SUBRAMANIAN
PICTURES: BLANCA MARISA GARCIA

BECOMING A JIU JITSU ENGINEER

When I was young, I would periodically ask my father, an engineering professor, for help with maths homework.

One of my brown belt students, Arun Subramanian, wrote this interesting piece, which I think you guys will really appreciate. Enjoy! - Nic Gregoriades

Every time I did so, he would infuriatingly go backwards, attempting to provide context that seemed completely removed from the problem at hand. When I would grow frustrated and ask why he couldn't just tell me how to find the answer to what was in front of me, he would calmly point out that to do so would be counterproductive. His goal was not to teach me how to solve the current problem, but rather to understand the essential elements of that type of situation, so that I could solve any problem presented to me that adhered to the same schema.

THE EARLIEST QUESTIONS

The first question nearly every newcomer to jiu jitsu, or any functional martial art, is likely to ask is: "What?" Everything looks and feels so strange, particularly in a grappling discipline. When you first see something as basic as an Americana, much less a more complicated submission, you're simply trying to identify *what* you're looking at. "What?" typically occurs in conjunction with "How?" How is this technique applied?

Striking arts can be enormously technical and complex, but it's easy for the casual observer, or neophyte practitioner, to believe they have some innate understanding of them because the desired outcome (the knockout) is viscerally easy to perceive. This is not so in a grappling context where it can be difficult for the inexperienced viewer to understand why someone is tapping. For a new student that routinely puts themselves in danger, submissions seem to come from out of nowhere, adhering to no logic. As such, it's not surprising that in jiu jitsu, the first two questions asked, "What?" and "How?" relate to identification.

"CLASSICALLY, JIU JITSU INSTRUCTION HAS LARGELY BEEN FOCUSED ON THE INFORMATION GATHERING QUESTIONS, LEAVING THE PROCESSING TO OCCUR NATURALLY AS A STUDENT GAINS MORE EXPERIENCE. BUT, WHAT IF STUDENTS WERE ENCOURAGED TO ASK "WHY?" FROM THE VERY BEGINNING?"

ADDITIONAL LAYERS OF INFORMATION

While it certainly has relevance with respect to technique as well, the importance of "Where?" comes into play when we consider a newcomer's understanding of position. It takes time to understand the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various configurations grapplers find themselves in. While this is generally accomplished by repeatedly being being submitted from inferior positions, this can be confusing to new students when they get caught from what they understand to be a superior position. This happens frequently to new practitioners, because while attempting to focus on "Where?", they fail to control the position properly, back to "What?" and "How?"

The exploratory phase of blue belt also tends to encourage students to ask "Who?" Especially now, where study off the mat is easier than ever before, jiu jitsu practitioners frequently look to others, particularly those at the highest levels of the game and with similar body types or positional affinities, for inspiration and detail. While "Who?" is a question that typically comes after some understanding of the basics and can be extremely useful as a study tool, at the early stages it can be disproportionately focused on emulating the steps, as opposed to understanding the reasons.

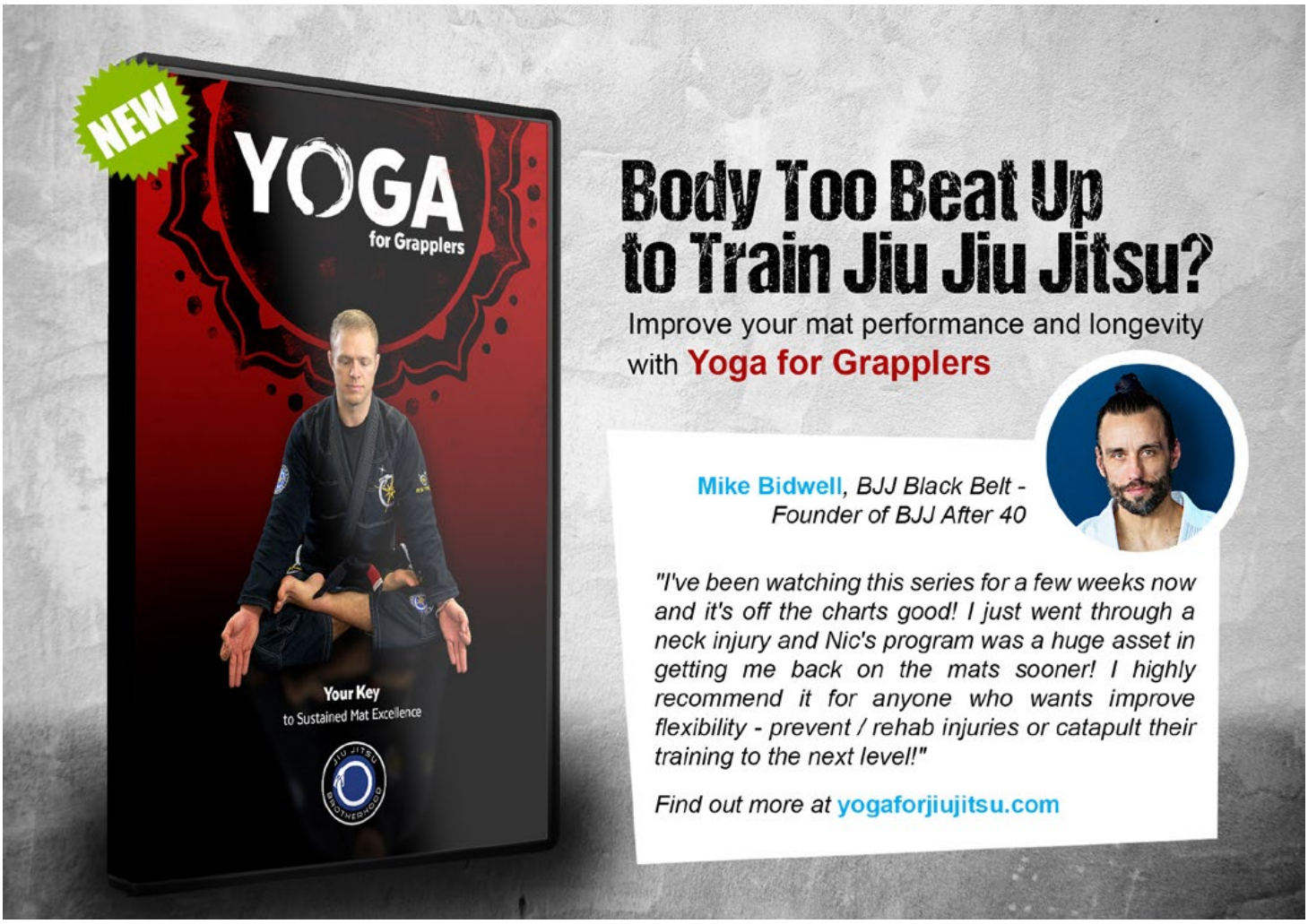
A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

I believe the questions we've discussed so far: "What?", "Where?", "How?" and "Who?" are, in this context, about information gathering; assembling the raw materials for later processing. It is not surprising, then, that they are the questions that tend to get asked at the beginner belt levels. At the more advanced belts of purple and brown, it becomes more common for people to consider the information processing questions, those my father was attempting to get me to ask, "When?" and, perhaps most critically, "Why?" The further one progresses in Brazilian jiu jitsu, the more important timing becomes. Executing a technique with incorrect timing not only decreases its odds of success, but can also contribute to expending far too much energy. Refining timing in this way typically occurs after the broad strokes of the information gathering questions have already been cemented in the practitioner's mind and body.

The final question, "Why?", is typically developed by attempting to communicate information to someone less experienced. This, I believe, is one of the primary reasons that it is generally something that becomes more prominent with the advanced ranks, to whom lower ranks look for guidance. Further, these practitioners have a wealth of experience, full of examples from which to build their understanding of "Why?"

UNDERSTANDING WHILE LEARNING

Classically, jiu jitsu instruction has largely been focused on the information gathering questions, leav-


NEW
YOGA
for Grapplers
Your Key
to Sustained Mat Excellence
Body Too Beat Up
to Train Jiu Jiu Jitsu?
Improve your mat performance and longevity
with Yoga for Grapplers
Mike Bidwell, BJJ Black Belt -
Founder of BJJ After 40
"I've been watching this series for a few weeks now and it's off the charts good! I just went through a neck injury and Nic's program was a huge asset in getting me back on the mats sooner! I highly recommend it for anyone who wants improve flexibility - prevent / rehab injuries or catapult their training to the next level!"
Find out more at yogaforjiujitsu.com

ing the processing to occur naturally as a student gains more experience. But, what if students were encouraged to ask "Why?" from the very beginning? Or, in the absence of their asking, if the conceptual information for "Why?" were provided along with "What?" and "How?" Perhaps it would allow students to organise and connect information as it comes in, like arranging Tetris pieces as they fall, rather than waiting for the board to fill up before attempting to slide them around. Doing so may allow patterns to be noticed earlier, allowing for faster development.

At the earliest stages, these patterns may be as simple as the same movement applied to multiple situations (consider the ways in which a straight armbar and straight ankle lock are similar in their control and finish). Alternatively, they may relate to the same biomechanical weakness being exploited with different structures (a Kimura and Omoplata both target the shoulder in the same way, and by noticing the way the "Kimura trap" control system exploits that weakness, it's relatively easy to see how the Omoplata can be applied in similar ways.)

As one progresses further, these concepts get increasingly distilled to things like posture, base, structure, frames, etc. Nearly every black belt I know thinks in those terms, realising that boiling a problem down to its essential elements is more efficient than a hyper-focus on the "What?" and the "How?" With that level of experience, they are able to derive a large portion of the details, even for techniques that are new to them. More importantly, they are ideally able to use this conceptual understanding to defuse unfamiliar situations opponents throw at them, because they recognise in what way the opponent is attempting to affect their posture, base, structure, frames, etc.

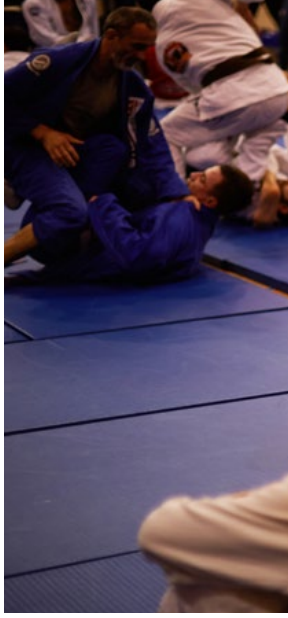
While the goal is conceptual knowledge, the information gathering questions are certainly still vitally important. Had my father attempted to teach me maths with no concrete examples, and then proceeded to give me a list of problems, I likely would have failed miserably. But this was not his approach. His style was to provide specific examples along with the context required to generalize to overarching principles simultaneously. Indeed, when considering any logical discipline, from mathematics to computer science, this is the model that the best teachers seem to employ.

But the best part is that even in the absence of this teaching style, the student can simply decide to approach their learning in this way by asking "Why?" whenever they don't immediately understand the reason behind something. Over time, as their conceptual understanding improves, they will be able to deduce the "Why?" with some critical thought, even if they don't see it right away. I believe anyone can benefit greatly from considering "Why?" as much as possible. In the absence of any other information, understanding "Why?" is the easiest way to derive the details for oneself.

NIC GREGORIADES

Nic is Roger Gracie's first black belt student and the founder of the Jiu Jitsu Brotherhood

WORDS: SAM JOSEPH
PICTURES: LUKE JARVIS



WAYS TO INVEST IN OUR BJJ FUTURE

As a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu coach, most of the questions I get asked by students have to do with reaching goals.

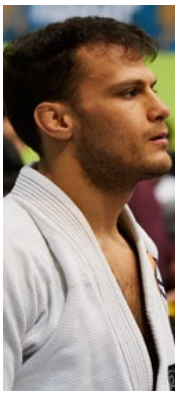
Whether short or long term goals, they have in common that they are in the future and they are impacted by what is done in the present. While there are unique goals that might be reached by navigating different circumstances, I have found a few pieces of advice that are universally helpful. They allow us to invest in our BJJ journeys today in ways that support positive future outcomes.

COMMIT TO REGULAR TRAINING

It may sound clichéd but committing to train regularly is the number one investment we can make in our BJJ. The key here is in how we define "regularly". Some of us have the freedom and desire to train five plus times a week, while others have demands on our schedules that make us lucky to get in once a week - or simply do not want to train "full-time". Accepting the fact that the more we get on the mat, the more quickly we will progress, "regularly" in this context simply means that we train when we can.

One of my favorite "instructor axioms" is "Don't worry about what you can't do…focus on what you can control and it will be enough". When we focus on the fact that we are training as much as our schedule permits, it allows training to stay a positive and fun experience. The same training will not be as productive if we approach it with the negative mindset that we should be training more. Making the choice to commit to regular training, while defining it with the correct perspective in relation to our goals/priorities/availability, sets us up for long-term success in BJJ.

TAKE NOTES



The next step is to maximize the time we can spend on the mat and "taking notes" is a great way to help accomplish that. Coming through the ranks (and relocating for work a few times), I was blessed to spend significant amounts of time with great instructors like Jacare, the Yamasaki brothers, Franciso Neto, Pablo Popovitch and Shawn Williams. They were all excellent and offered unique insights and perspectives that still inform my BJJ views on and off the mat. One of the things I am very grateful for is that I started taking notes early on in my BJJ journey. I did not do anything special; I simply got a notebook and began jotting down positional details and concepts after classes. To this day, I still look back to these notes for reminders and ideas.

After every class I teach, I encourage my students to "take notes". Today's students have many options, including simple notebook journaling as I did, organised BJJ journals, online BJJ resources, videoing techniques with commentary, etc…. whatever works best for us in terms of retention and organisation. When we are consistent with our "note-taking", we are making regular deposits in the savings accounts that represent our BJJ futures.

GET A MENTOR/BE A MENTOR

I remember hearing how Gordon Ryan often travelled with his instructor, Garry Tonon, as he was coming up the ranks. Whether Tonon was going to training, a seminar or a competition, it was likely that you would find Ryan with him, interacting and learn-

Sam Joseph is a 2nd degree Black Belt in BJJ under the Yamasaki Academy. He was awarded his black belt in 2007 and has vast experience as a teacher, BJJ competitor and MMA fighter.

"IT MAY SOUND CLICHÉD BUT COMMITTING TO TRAIN REGULARLY IS THE NUMBER ONE INVESTMENT WE CAN MAKE IN OUR BJJ"

ing. Today, Ryan is one of the most exciting prospects in BJJ. Already an EBI champion with legendary matches against Keenan Cornelius and Felipe Pena, it is obvious that Ryan benefited from being mentored by Polaris, Metamoris and EBI champion, Garry Tonon. At the very least, Tonon's investment and example helped guide him through his stages of development at a faster rate.

I see situations like this regularly in the academy. A white or blue belt connects with a senior student due to similar body-type, style, goals and/or personality and they spend time together drilling and training. This often leads to noticeable improvement in the lower belt in a relatively short period of time. While this can happen organically, I tell my students actively to seek these types of relationships as the benefits are too great to ignore.

The best thing about mentor/mentee relationships is that the mentor also wins. Staying with the Tonon/Ryan example, Garry Tonon is still an active competitor and has a stated goal of being ADCC open-weight champion. Do you think it helps Tonon that his primary training partner is a world-class grappler in his own right? Beyond the friendship, the technical improvements gained from teaching a talented pupil and the satisfaction of promoting such a talent through the ranks; in Ryan, Tonon has a teammate who can help propel him towards future achievements.

Again, I see this reflected on the academy mat. The senior student grows as he/she invests in his/her protégé. This supports their own forward momentum towards their goals and contributes to their BJJ future.

COMPETE

I am a firm believer that competition will significantly enhance the BJJ experience. The keys for me are: 1. Realistically approaching competition in a way that fits our lives and training schedules and 2. Processing the results in positive ways. When we view competition in the proper perspective, meaning that it is a part of the overall BJJ journey and not simply about results, it becomes a vehicle leading us to broadening our horizons in the sport, technical improvement and fun.

Coming up through the ranks at the Yamasaki Academy with David Jacobs, I got to see this first-hand. Jacobs trained regularly but it was the consistent competition schedule he kept that had huge impacts on his BJJ game and philosophies. When we went to tournaments, his experience went beyond his matches and what they exposed in terms of where he needed improvement. Jacobs took the time to get to know other competitors and instructors and made contacts who would become friends. These friendships have allowed him to travel the world for seminars, academy visits and more competitions. Jacobs has often expressed to me that these interactions have been highlights in his BJJ journey.

Often, we focus on winning and losing when it comes to competing. Competition can be more than that… it can be a tool by which we greatly invest in our BJJ lives in a variety of ways.

DIET AND PROACTIVE MAINTENANCE

In 2012, I suffered a back injury doing an arm-drag. The pain was debilitating and, for the first time in my life, I sought out chiropractic care at Optimum Health Rehab & Wellness. My back problem ended up being a blessing in disguise. The regular adjustments helped me recover and then get stronger, while they also changed my diet using data from food sensitivity testing. Five years later, and older, I feel healthier and have more energy for life… and BJJ. That experience has taught me to enthusiastically recommend chiropractic care and dietary consulting to all my students looking to train long-term. It has also opened my mind to things like cryotherapy, acupuncture, yoga and different ways to approach diet. The point is, that taking a proactive approach to maintaining our bodies via treatment and diet, paves the way towards longevity in BJJ.

CONCLUSION:

Some of these suggestions may seem like "common sense" but there is power in their simplicity and how they provide building blocks for our BJJ futures. When we are consistent in doing these things, we put these blocks together and provide solid foundations for success and bright futures in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu.

See you on the mat! ■

WORDS: MATT JARDINE
PICTURES: LUKE JARVIS

CREATURES OF HABIT

Have you heard of *The Big Bang Theory*? Not the prevailing cosmological model for the creation of our universe, but the American TV sitcom about the lives of a group of nerdy scientist friends?

I must admit I'm hooked, and on the flight back from Portugal after this year's European Championships, I had the opportunity to sit next to and discuss BJJ with a real-life scientist. It was fascinating, enlightening, and rather useful.

For years, I have been interested in the science of the mind and, amongst other things, its effect on our abilities to both learn and direct an outcome. In the last twelve months, these investigations have gathered momentum and are shaping themselves into a new book. For now, ahead of its release, allow me to share some findings that could help your jiu jitsu today.

The research and readings of work by three doctors, plus interviews and conversations with the latter two compile this article: Dr Joe Dispenza - chiropractor, researcher and author most famed for his appearance in the docufilm, '*What the BLEEP do we know*?'; Dr Peter Bain - fellow martial artist and leading specialist in Neurology and Dr Colin Adrain - a molecular biologist at the Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciencia in Lisbon (the man I sat next to on the plane).

SAME OLD, SAME OLD

Before we investigate if our science friends have any solutions, it is important to identify the problem requiring addressing; a problem we may not yet fully realise besets us.

Consider the following, universally common, daily BJJ scenario:

During class, your instructor has just shown you a technique and all its corresponding details. After an opportunity to ask clarifying questions, you are sent on your way to practise. Later, you are encouraged to apply the move under pressure during specific-sparring. Finally, you are tasked with integrating the technique where and if possible during the complexities and uncertainties of free-rolling.

We all recognise this progressive system and can relate to it, no matter which variations our academies employ. It is a process that attempts to instruct, practise and integrate. Simple. Logical. Effective. But is this good enough? Let's delve a little deeper.

Within the confines of our academy walls this system seems to work well and our improvements, albeit small and incremental, suggest it is an effective means of heightening our jiu jitsu levels. But, what happens when we attempt to integrate the newly formed technique under further pressure; the type of pressure experienced in competition, for example? Or, against an opponent at the academy that we desperately don't want to tap to (for whatever reason)? Or, on those days when we arrive at the class a little tired, stressed and out of sorts? Or, when just wanting to indulge in a type of jiu jitsu game radically different from the one we currently play?

All of us, if we are honest, know the answers to these questions. We often find ourselves reverting to techniques that are more familiar and comfortable than the new ones we are learning and striving to implement. Despite our desire to advance our game, old habits die hard and we return to dependency on previously tried and tested BJJ arsenals when the stakes are high.

On the surface this may not seem such a bad thing, particularly if your skill set is a winning one. After all, why fix something that isn't broken? It's a reasonable argument. But the danger comes when - and it is 'when', not 'if' - we are required to fathom answers and arrive at creative solutions to previously unencountered problems. And, do it all under pressure.

Unless we know how to parry our tendencies to revert to the already known, it will be close to impossible to reach our full potential and progress above and beyond the challenges that stand outside our comfort zones.

SURVIVAL VS CREATION

Our scientists have seen this all before in their labs and during their experiments into the brain and its learning mechanisms. The following is what they tell us is happening when we revert to pulling guard rather than ambitiously attempting the drop seoi nage we have been mesmerised by on YouTube. From an evolutionary perspective, life is preferable to death, which is why the first developed ancient parts of our brain - the hindbrain (sometimes referred to as the reptilian brain) - is designed primarily for matters of survival.

The hindbrain is forever running in the background, with the sole purpose of improving our odds of survival, then sharing our DNA through procreation (sex) and ensuring further survival through evolution. (Don't need that tail anymore - drop it off the skeleton, it's slowing us down). Like its namesake, think of the reptile that feeds, reproduces and spends forever on red alert, so that it can live to do it all again another day. A similar jiu jitsu example would be the brand new white belt thrashing under the weight of a decent mount. Their priority is only 'not dying', and all else (advice from coaches waiting in the wings) is 'unheard' by the brain as they single-mindedly go about the task of surviving.

As life evolved, it expressed its growth as mammals and the part of the brain that facilitated this was the limbic region. With the limbic region and its associated structures came the ability to experience emotion. Through this beautiful addition to the brain, life's texture became richer, more varied and colourful. Life was now much more than mere survival. How we survived and spent our days was beginning to be important. At this point, a white belt with a few stripes is wanting more from their academy than just the raw panic of survival. By now - a few months in - they are beginning to enjoy both academy camaraderie and a more comfortable, open mind. At this stage, they can

"UNLESS WE KNOW HOW TO PARRY OUR TENDENCIES TO REVERT TO THE ALREADY KNOWN, IT WILL BE CLOSE TO IMPOSSIBLE TO REACH OUR FULL POTENTIAL"

absorb some well-meaning tips and advice on mount escape from their new jiu jitsu buddies.

The latest edition to brain evolution and development, formed within the skulls of advanced mammals and humans, is known as the neocortex. This area of the brain is responsible for the development of language, abstract thought, and consciousness. It is what makes us human, as we know it, and has almost unlimited learning abilities. Our scientists tell us that the latest research in specialist brain subjects, Neuroplasticity and Epigenetics, suggests that the brain's potential for growth, development, and awesomeness (my word not theirs), is even surprising them. It seems we have evolved to be the creators of our destinies. Life has moved from mere survival to feeling, to the joy of utter creation simply for the fun of it. Brown belts and above with their open guards epitomise this level of heightened endeavour and expressionism- well, some of them!

Although the shift of life has moved from survival (and the fear of losing it) to creative living (and the enjoyment of it), there is a problem. Our neocortex is still in its infancy, and the pull of our survival-focused reptilian brain is very much present. There is a constant battle between survival and creativity: playing not to lose vs playing to win, so to speak.

OUR TOUGHEST OPPONENTS: STRESS, BETA WAVES AND EVOLUTIONARY HARD-WIRING

From a neurology perspective, we are a product of our past experiences and related actions.

Circuits of neurons (basic working units of the brain) represent our responses and reactions to stimuli. There are billions of neurons inside our heads, each one potentially connecting with up to 10,000 other neurons. It is these interconnected neurons that underlie our habits and the continuation of our habits. Repetition strengthens the neuronal circuits. It is this process that allows you to tie your belt without thinking. The habit is deeply engrained, through hundreds of reps.

As a white and blue belt, more hours have been spent repeating the art of defending, than the art of attacking. The goals of survival over creativity have determined the composition of the neurological circuits. Think of the many white and blue belt matches you have seen at tournaments, where two opponents hold onto each other for dear life for the duration of the contest. Neither wanting to lose, nor, seemingly, able to reach for lofty heights of winning.

The scientists tell us that our routines, known thoughts and feelings perpetuate the same state of being, which in turn creates the same behaviour and experiences in the future; a habitual 'Catch 22'. The two competitors holding onto each other for six minutes without much action are very likely to recreate the same reality at higher belts unless they take drastic and definite action.

And there is another problem too. Stress. To create new and updated patterns of thinking, progress and later habits, our scientists tell us that we must be employing our neocortex and its corresponding brain waves. But, they warn, this is not quite as simple as it sounds, certainly where stress is concerned.

A BIT ABOUT BRAIN WAVES

An electroencephalograph is a piece of technology that scientists use to record and measure the brain's changing electrical activity. Research has discovered a broad spectrum of brain-wave frequencies in humans. These range from low levels during sleep (delta waves), a state between deep sleep and wakefulness (theta), a creative, imaginative state (alpha) and then the higher frequencies of conscious thought (beta waves). The highest rates recorded (gamma waves) are seen in high states of consciousness.

The alpha level - the level that sits at the gateway of the 'conscious' beta and the other 'subconscious' levels of theta and delta, is where learning and change take place. In alpha states and below, brain waves are calm, harmonised and conducive to health, learning and habit change. However, in our modern days we spend ever-increasing amounts of time operating from the hindbrain with its frantic, stress-filled and survival orientated beta level brain waves.

The myriad reasons why we spend so much time stuck in beta is beyond the scope of this article, but one example is the brain's inability to conclusively switch off from threat. In Neolithic days, once we as cavemen and women had outrun a 'physical' threat, we could relax, restore and rest. Nowadays, the threat is ever present: looming deadlines, protracted social media arguments and long workdays are just a few reasons why we are always switched on in stress mode and surfing beta brain waves.

In this state of constant emergency, our scattered thinking creates feelings of anger, fear, doubt, anxiety, competitiveness, frustration and sometimes, depression. Staying too long in this brain is neither healthy for the body nor conducive for creative, expansive, and progressive living. At beta level it is near impossible to implement creative and forward thinking, progress, or change, and we revert to simple techniques and tactics of survival. The most limited patterns of behaviour that are most dominant within our personal psychology and biology dominate here.

One of the greatest scientists of all, Albert Einstein, famously said that: "Problems cannot be solved with the same mindset that created them." Quite simply, for us, we cannot expect to come up with creative and open jiu jitsu games while stressed out and stuck in old familiar ways!

So, what can we do? Luckily for us, scientists have not only identified the problem, but also possible solutions. And it begins with recreating ourselves anew.

A PATH TO REINVENTING YOURSELF

We have already learnt that without considerable effort, habitual neurology will drive us to think the same thoughts, arrive at the same conclusions, receive the same results and attract the same circumstances, with only marginal differences, time and again, ad infinitum.

Over coffee, Dr Peter Bain told me about the brain's almost infinite possibilities to learn skills, despite our age or other physical limits (known as neuroplasticity). Dr Adrain, also over coffee, but on a plane, explained that the brain, regarding health, can also switch on and off genes which relate to diseases and disorders that were previously considered genetically determined (Epigenetics). Both men agree that the brain, used correctly, has promise for moving us beyond the limits of our negative, self-limiting habits.

Based on their work, the following is a possible three-part plan for reinventing yourself and your jiu jitsu:

1: Learn to relax

Before we can get into the other two parts, we must first lay the foundations in part one by learn-

ing to relax. The time has come when, if you are serious about your jiu jitsu progress, you will need to add the following to your kit bag alongside your kimono, belt, flip flops, finger tape, mouthguard and towel: meditation skills.

In 2017, meditation is no longer a term bound by Eastern mysticism, religious doctrine and espoused solely by westerners wearing tie-dye yoga trousers while working their way through a midlife crisis in an Ashram up a mountain somewhere. Countless ordinary folk have discovered for themselves the pragmatic day-to-day benefits that this simple method of brain training can provide. A regular meditation programme is strength and conditioning for your brain and added to your other S&C routines could help take your jiu jitsu to the next level.

A detailed description on how to meditate is also beyond the scope of this article, but I assure you, from personal experience, that it is not a complicated task. I will suggest a book that contains excellent and practical instruction in meditation later, but for now, let me outline why the scientists say it is such an important skill to master.

Amongst other things, the skills learnt through meditation help calm the haphazard and fraught beta waves and encourage the more relaxed and coherent alpha waves, where our brains can work optimally. In this state, we are also more able to engage in two other essential brain skills that will facilitate our progress: mental detachment and mental rehearsal.

2: Unlearn the old you

With powerful neuronal habits governing our every move (if you don't believe it, try putting the opposite leg to the one you currently use in your gi trousers first and see how surprisingly tricky it is), it is essential to unpick some of the habits that now control us. To do this, we must employ one of the critical skills that meditation practice provides: mental detachment.

"WHEN WE MINDLESSLY ENGAGE IN HABITS WITHOUT CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THEM, IN ESSENCE, WE ARE SLAVES TO OUR MIND"

When we mindlessly engage in habits without careful attention to them, in essence, we are slaves to our mind. Unquestioningly, we are led down the same alleys to dance the same dictated rhythms and patterns. With every mindless automatic and unconsidered reaction, we further strengthen the habit and make it harder to break in the future.

But, mental detachment creates a gap between the experience, the firing of a habit, and our subsequent reaction. For example, let's say that a white belt student routinely gives up their back when trying to prevent knee-on-belly position. They may be a little overweight, and the discomfort of the position overrides the advice they have been given about 'turning in', rather than 'turning away'. This student is a slave to their past habits; they are being controlled by their habitual tendency to avoid discomfort.

Imagine instead that when they feel the pressure, before reacting, they mentally take a backwards step, a small breath, and a pause. At this moment, the habit is minutely weakened by misuse. The student can then either choose to find another option to the problem, thereby further weakening the habit, or engage in it, further solidifying it. Whichever choice, it has been a mindful decision, and an important step in willful re-creation.

3: Choose a new you

As we begin to become more aware of our actions, reactions and choices through calm mental detachment and subsequent awareness, we start to undo old habits and pave the way to a life of our own volition. We are becoming a little freer to steer our ship and take it on whatever adventure we care to imagine. This is is where the fun starts

The final step in this three-part process is to mindfully (fully aware rather than habitually reactive) begin to make new choices and then rehearse and practise them until they have become new, better habits. Clearly, mat time will play a significant role in building new skills and behaviour, but our scientists have given us some other tricks that we can also utilise. The brain does not differentiate between reality and imagination. If you imagine sucking a lemon, for example, the body will have the same physical reactions as if you were sucking a real one. It is why our heartbeats rise and adrenalin is released when we think ahead to a jiu jitsu competition; our body is living the experience that we are imagining.

We can use the same understanding to enhance our jiu jitsu practice without having to add additional physical mat hours to our schedule. This method is the practice of mental rehearsal. The scientists tell us that if we can correctly practise mental rehearsal, then our brains will form the same new neuronal circuitry and habits as those formed by skills exercised physically.

This is an important point. In this way, we can learn to create good habits around stressful situations (such as competition), whilst in the calm and optimal mindset of our meditation. It is similar to the character, Neo, in the Matrix films, downloading martial arts skills straight into his brain while sitting in a chair. All the more amazing is that science is proving that this may be possible someday. As if they haven't been helpful enough, our boffins in white coats (actually none of them had white coats on when I met them) have three bonus pieces of scientifically insightful genius for us. These last tips are aimed at improving our mental rehearsal and, in turn, our jiu jitsu (or whatever else you choose to use it for):

1. Mentally rehearse the skill as if you were performing it in the present moment. Don't picture past skills that you desperately long to duplicate, or skills that you (fingers crossed) hope may aquire in the future.

2. Use as many of your five senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell) in the imagery as possible. Try and 'trick' the brain into believing it is experiencing reality. Imagine what the legs you double smash will feel like under your grip. Picture what you will smell when you stand on the podium waiting for gold. Visualise what you will see when you look up at the faces in the crowd. Rehearse what you will hear when you suffocate the opponent under you mount, and imagine how that bowl of acai will taste after you successfully make weight.

3. Finally, it is important that you are emotionally bonded to what you are mentally rehearsing for it to be as effective as it can be. You must fire the neurons of feeling in your brain. How relieved will you feel when you imagine finally beating your nemesis? How grateful will you feel for your team's sideline coaching when you return to them with your gold medal? How happy will you feel when you imagine returning to the academy, fully healed, after the shoulder injury that has kept you off the mats for weeks.

So, there you have it. As much information as I could glean from my time with the scientists, their books, thoughts and breakthrough discoveries. As much as I have tried to distill their ideas into an article that may help you as jiu jitsu players, I'm aware that you will enhance your understanding if you investigate these ideas for yourselves. With this in mind I suggest the book, 'Breaking the habit of being yourself', by Dr Joe Dispenza, as further reading. It is as accessible and comprehensive a title that I have read on the subject yet.

In an art that is forever looking for ways to recreate itself, I guess it shouldn't be a surprise that we find ourselves knocking on the door of science for their perspective on evolution and change. And maybe, in our search for jiu jitsu excellence, their guidance may be genuinely valuable. It makes me wish I'd concentrated a bit more in secondary school chemistry now. Who knows, by now not only would I have perfected the art of utilising my brain for better jiu jitsu, I may also have worked out how to clone a Leandro Lo and put him on my team.

Matt Jardine is an author, writer and teacher of the martial arts. He is currently working on a new book about martial arts, the brain and effective learning. After planning a 'pull-guard feint to ankle pick take down' and not using it in his last tournament, he would be well advised to read his own material. The Dope!

PHOTOGRAPHER - JOSH HALVATZIS (FROTA ACADEMY)

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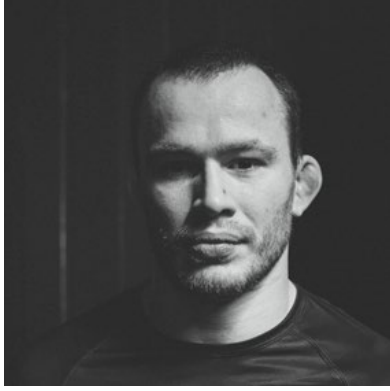
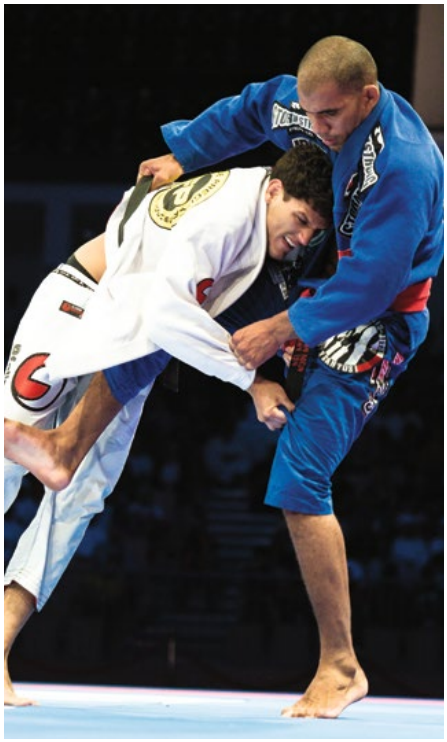
WORDS: OLIVER GEDDES

THE TWO UNIVERSAL RULES OF BJJ: PART 1

Jiu jitsu is an art that can be either very simple or extremely complicated, depending on a practitioner's perspective.



Oli Geddes is a seasoned competitor, referee, globetrotter, half guard connoisseur and black belt under Roger Gracie



Modern jiu jitsu is adding new and exceptionally detailed areas of expertise every year: the berimbolo game, the leg lock game, and the leg drag game being just three critically important areas of the modern game that can be done competently very easily (apparently), but have many small details and variations that can take years to take on-board and master.

That said, I have spent many years of teaching trying to simplify things down so that anyone, even those who learn more slowly, can have concepts they can hang on to in rolling and that will always stand them in good stead. This has boiled down to two universal rules of jiu jitsu: one for the top game and one for the bottom game, the first of which is as follows:

When on top – when in doubt, drive your head into your opponent's jaw.

It should be noted this is not quite as violent as I make it sound and we certainly aren't looking for impact here, but it applies in many situations. It also feeds into a larger concept that I like to call 'Open Face Theory'. Open Face Theory is the idea that when you are trying to control someone, either from the bottom or the top, you are looking to control the open faces of their various joints, whether it be the elbow, the shoulder, the knee - if you can see the open face of a joint, you can control it.

If someone has their armpit area open and exposed, then you should be able to pin that corner of their torso to the ground. If they have it closed and rolled in and they are on their side, then they will, in turn, be very hard to pin down because the face of that joint has been concealed and protected by the rest of their body.

If someone can put direct pressure on the inside face of your knee whilst inside your guard or half-guard, they are likely to be able to push your knee to the floor and begin passing your guard. If you're on the bottom and you can place a spider guard foot in your opponent's bicep, opening up their armpit and their elbow, you will generally be able to control their body and they will have a hard time controlling yours. If you have the same position but their elbow is tucked tight to their body and their arm is engaged defensively, you will have a much harder time moving them.

So, to the head drive: the jaw is also a joint, and an open face that controls the whole of the body. If you can open up someone's jaw so they are forced to look in a direction that is not the direction they wish to go, they will have an exceptionally hard time being powerful or moving efficiently.

If someone has an underhook from half guard and is trying to take your back, you will need to slow that process down until you can improve your position. You can't put an underhook back in when you are already compromised, so you need to create space for your own underhook whilst at the same time slowing your opponent's progress.

Driving your head under their jaw is an exceptionally powerful way of doing so. It's also very easy to focus your weight and pressure on your head - after all, your legs and hips and shoulders are all attached to your spine and your neck, so should you wish to bring your entire weight to bear on someone, it's much easier to redirect your whole body than to try to be strong with a hand or a shoulder, because that requires a bias towards one side of the body or the other.

> "I HAVE SPENT MANY YEARS OF TEACHING TRYING TO SIMPLIFY THINGS SO THAT ANYONE, EVEN THOSE WHO LEARN MORE SLOWLY, CAN HAVE CONCEPTS THEY CAN HANG ON TO IN ROLLING"

By driving your head into theirs, you are breaking their posture and isolating their head from the rest of their body whilst also ensuring your own body fully supports your pressure and movement. Then, when the opportunity arises, you can move to improve your position or take advantage of whatever other routes present themselves.

Secondly, it's very important when it comes to defending submissions. Guillotines, loop chokes, regular cross chokes - as a rule, most of these positions have a position for placing optimal pressure. The guillotine requires the opponent's head to be in your armpit, loop chokes require the head to be on one side of the body or the other, cross chokes generally require your opponent's head to be down in your abdomen area to apply the most finishing power.

So, if someone is setting up a guillotine, a loop choke, a cross choke or anything else that requires your head (this also applies, to a lesser extent, to armlocks, shoulder locks, etc.) if you can, re-orient your pressure into their face or jaw rather than off their body where they will have the opportunity to lock up a tight submission, also allowing you to break their relative posture, as described above.

When I was a blue and purple belt, I used to hit loop chokes from bottom half guard all the time, but as I moved to brown and black they stopped being effective for me most of the time. The primary reason being that as the skill level of the top player rose, my ability to redirect their head sufficiently to set up an attack decreased, and so I never got the chance to get to a finishing position with the choke.

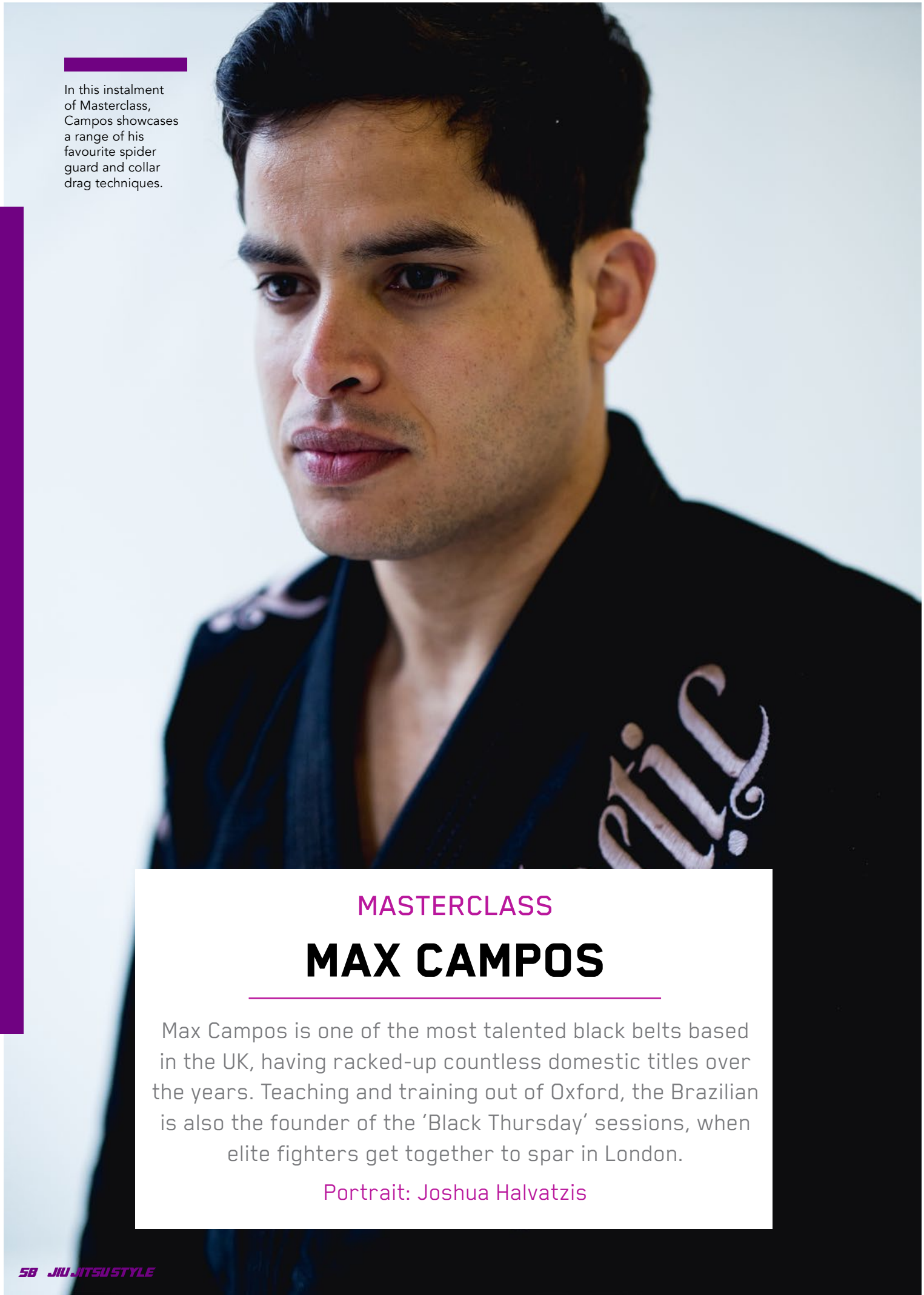
This can be done though, by driving your head into your opponent's face or, alternatively, by having a much better upright posture that prevents the bottom player from moving your head to one side, compromising your position and setting up their submissions that way. Two methods to attain the same result.

The truth of the rule was demonstrated to me, rather brutally, by Samuel Braga. I was training in a gym in Chicago at the time. He was visiting from out of town and dropped by, so obviously, I jumped at the opportunity to roll with a fighter of his level. As a half guard player, I would stay on my side, work to break his balance and shoot in for my underhook. Every single time that I did this, after I had attained a decent underhook he would drive his head into mine, stopping my progress and forcing my shoulders to open up. Then he would punch his own underhook through, convert my attacking position into his own knee slice, and then he would pass.

This happened many, many times and left an indelible impression on my jiu jitsu that still lasts to this day. In short, when you're on the bottom in a position where your opponent can put pressure on you, keep your chin down, your elbows and shoulders close and always be looking for the right angle. If you let them compromise your own posture - and posture is not just about being upright, it's the general alignment of your spine and your body as a whole - then you will be weak and you will create opportunities that your opponent will be able to take advantage of and punish you for.

Or, you could grow a really large, prickly beard. That can work too.

In this instalment of Masterclass, Campos showcases a range of his favourite spider guard and collar drag techniques.



MASTERCLASS

MAX CAMPOS

Max Campos is one of the most talented black belts based in the UK, having racked-up countless domestic titles over the years. Teaching and training out of Oxford, the Brazilian is also the founder of the 'Black Thursday' sessions, when elite fighters get together to spar in London.

Portrait: Joshua Halvatzis

1: Starting from spider guard with your feet on your opponent's biceps.

2/3/4: From here, I like to use a slightly different set up. Extend your right foot overhead to move your opponent forwards. At the same time, circle your left leg all the way behind their left knee as pictured.

5/6: Simply lift your hips to knock your opponent down to the mat.

7/8: From here, you can push your opponent's left knee down with your right hand, like a leg drag, to arrive in side control.

1: Starting from a seated position, you have a collar grip on your opponent's right lapel.

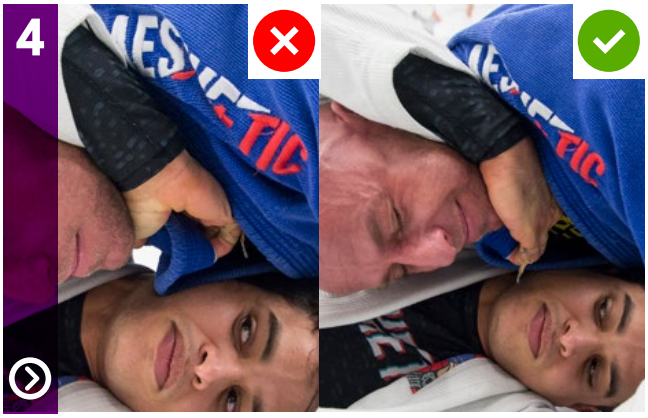
2/3: Your free arm is posted behind you to help maintain your posture. Make sure you follow your opponent's movements as they look to pass your guard.

4/5/6: When the timing is right shift your hips to the left and whip your right hand down so that your opponent is forced to put their hands on the mat.

7/8: Secure their right leg with your free hand and drive forwards to arrive on top for two points.

1: Starting from a seated position, you have a collar grip on your opponent's right lapel.

2/3/4: Normally your opponent will want to pass to their right, as this is their best chance of improving their position. Allow them to gain control of your trousers, so they think they can pass; at the same time pop their head under your hand to start the loop choke set up.



GRIP DETAILS: Adjust the position of your thumb as pictured to make the choke tighter.

5/6: Bring your right arm through to control the back of your opponent's triceps as you roll underneath to apply the pressure.

7/8: Maintain your grips as you walk around to side control to tighten the choke.

1: Starting from spider guard.

2/3/4/5: Extend your left leg overhead, and at the same time circle your right leg behind your opponent's, until you can arrive in a 50/50 position.

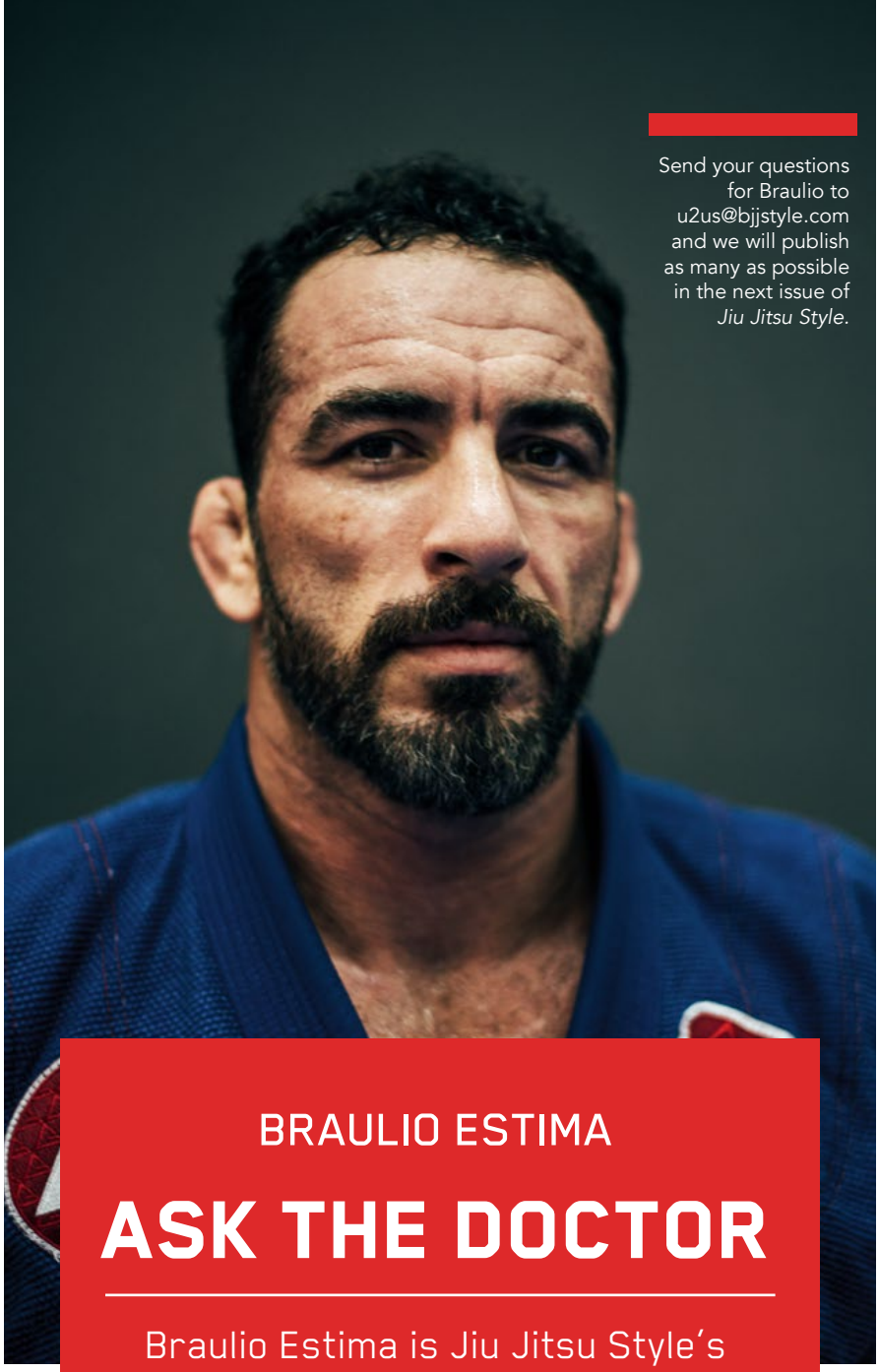
6/7/8: From here, manipulate your opponent's right lapel so that you secure it in your right hand as pictured. This grip makes it very hard for your opponent to escape the position.

9/10: Pendulum your left leg to sit up and bring your left foot across your opponent's right thigh.

11/12: From here you can release the grip on their lapel and secure their left ankle.

13/14: Pull your opponent's leg towards you and at the same time close your guard around your opponent's waist.

15/16: Finally, secure a toehold. The only way your opponent can release the pressure of the submission is to roll over, which gives you two points and you can also still finish the submission from the top.



Send your questions for Braulio to u2us@bjjstyle.com and we will publish as many as possible in the next issue of *Jiu Jitsu Style*.

BRAULIO ESTIMA

ASK THE DOCTOR

Braulio Estima is Jiu Jitsu Style's resident BJJ Doctor, helping prescribe our readers just the right tonic of tips to improve their grappling game.

Hi Braulio,
I wanted to ask a question about how you structure your competition training? I am adding a competition specific class into my club's schedule, but I don't quite know how best to use the hour (or 90 minutes, if that's not too long).

- Mo

Hi Mo,
In all honesty, I believe the secret to making the most of any competition session comes down to the individual and their ability to know their body and when they've pushed themselves enough. Generally, I will start my training three months out from a big competition.

When it comes to structuring a competition session, I like to use specific training a lot, as it's a very good way to get nice and warm at the beginning. From there, the best thing you can do is simply let people spar. I'd encourage people to be able to start from standing as well, because that's where you will start on the day of competition.

Like I say, it's more about the individual when it comes to optimizing competition training, so as the teacher, you must just create the correct environment for people to be able to train hard. The more competition training people do, the better they become at understanding how to best use the session; when to push hard, when to rest and when it's time to stop.

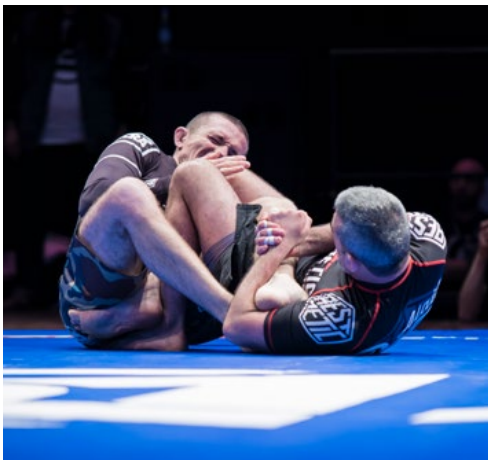
Hi Braulio,
Do you think we should be learning leglocks or leglock counters earlier than brown belt? I had a leglock guy come to our gym the other day and he totally destroyed me with leg submissions, even though I've been training much longer than him. I just haven't started looking at leg attacks yet.

- Claire

Hi Claire,
I would absolutely introduce leglocks to students before they hit brown belt. If you wait until you get your brown belt – so when you can use leglocks - before starting to work with the positions, then you're already playing catch up.

I suggest that students always make it clear to one another before they roll if they are going to allow leglocks; this is quite important. I would also not allow, say, a brown belt to leglock a white belt, because chances are the white belt won't know how to defend the position or understand when it's time to tap.

The only leglocks I reserve for brown and black belts are heel hooks. Once again, I would suggest that if you want to use heel hooks, it's important to mention this to your sparring partners before the roll so they are aware that they may need to defend these attacks.



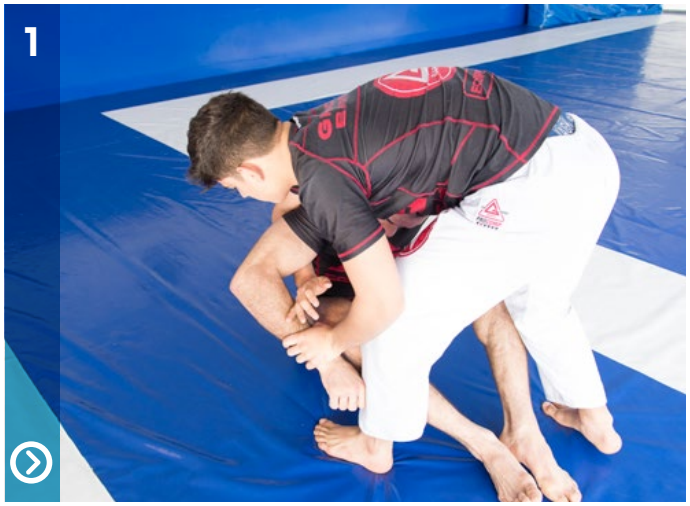
Rolling Kimura Grip Counter

Hi Braulio,
What do you do to escape when someone secures a kimura grip and uses it to pass your guard? So, my back is on the mat, but they've locked-off the grip and often they use it to get back control? A guy at training does this to me all the time!

- Hasan

Hi Hasan,
This is a very good question. The main things you need to concentrate on are your grips and the movement of your elbow. Most people panic here and try to sit up, turning into your opponent – that only gives them your back. Try this technique and see what you think.

1/2/3. Your opponent has locked-off a kimura grip and rolled to the mat. 4. Straight away, lock off a rear naked choke grip, but with your left hand sitting low on your opponent's forearm. 5/6. To escape the position, draw your right elbow backwards as you push down with your left forearm; as you can see this creates a nasty wristlock on your opponent, who will have to release their grips.



Hi Braulio,
Difficult question, but how do you handle students that ask you about promotions and seem very motivated by progressing through the belts. Do you hold people back more if they ask about the belts as a way of punishment? Do you promote people quicker depending on if they compete or not?

- Ronnie

Hi Ronnie,
This is a very good question: gaining an understanding of when to promote students is not as easy as it may seem. First of all, I definitely don't punish students if they ask when they're going to be promoted. Let's be honest, we've all been there before; wondering when we are going to get promoted - even if we didn't actually ask the teacher, but were just curious.

If someone asks me about when they can expect to get promoted, I always refer them to the Gracie Barra guidelines first, but the main aim with every student's promotion is to keep them motivated. I believe jiu jitsu is so good for you, so I never want a student to give up. Because of this, motivation becomes a very important part of an instructor's role – and so do belt promotions. To return to your question, I would say it's best to be honest with people when they ask you about promotion and perhaps help them set goals or milestones that they must expect to achieve to level-up.

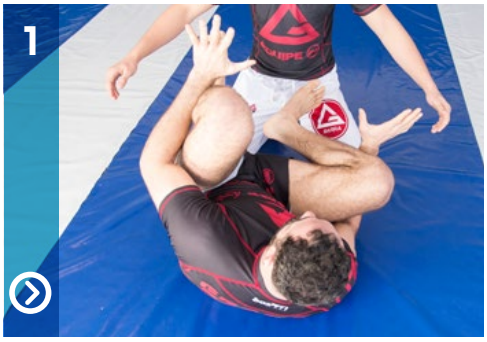
As you suggested, no one person shares the same journey, so it goes without saying that each belt represents something different for individual students. One guy may only be able to get to the academy once a week, while the other is on the mat every day and competing at the weekends; both of these students will require motivation in different ways – belt promotions included.

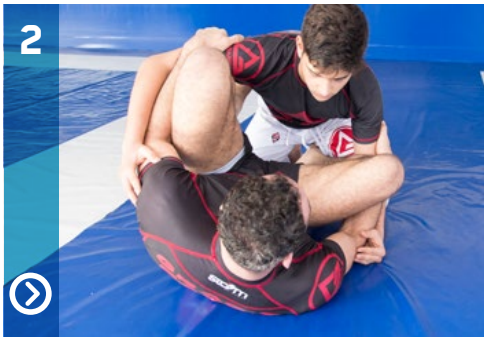
Nogi Open Guard Sweep

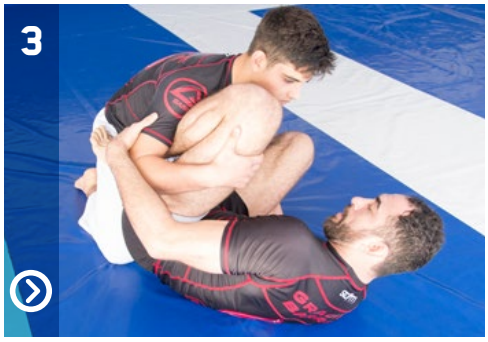
Hi Braulio,
I use spider guard a lot when I train in the gi, but I am really struggling to then make the transition to the nogi situations. Are there any guard attacks that you'd recommend for someone who usually uses spider guard when training in the gi?

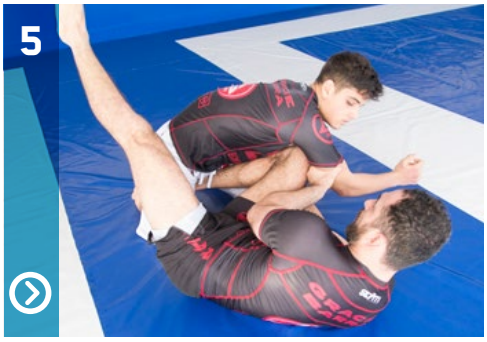
- Pablo

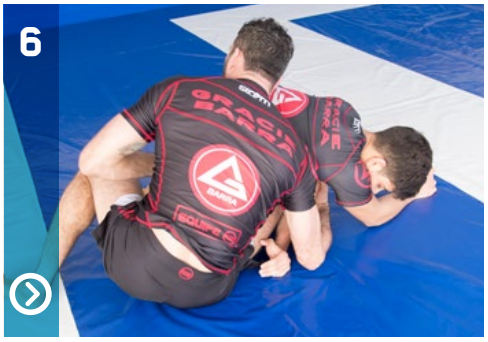
Hi Pablo,
That can be a tough transition, as spider guard just doesn't exist when it comes to nogi. Have a look at this technique and also the principles behind it; they should work well for you.

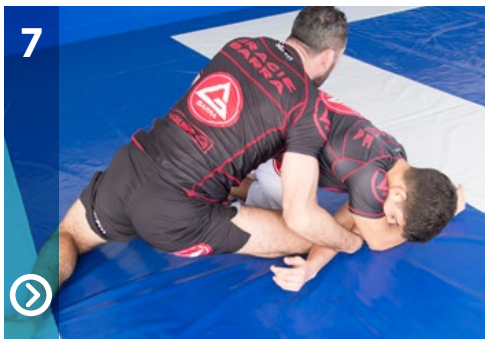


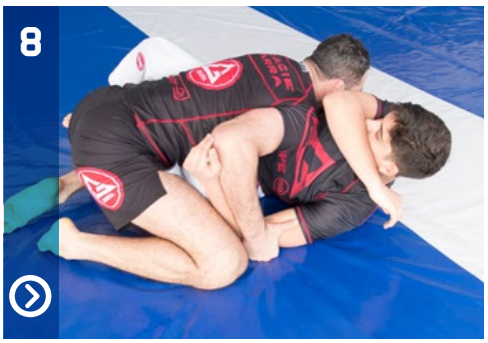




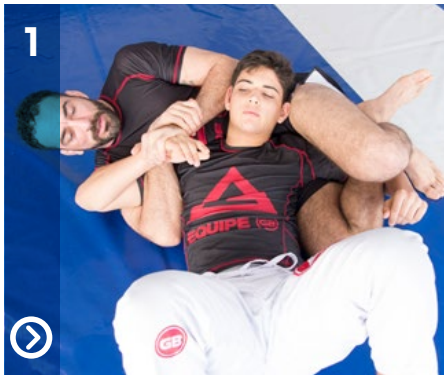


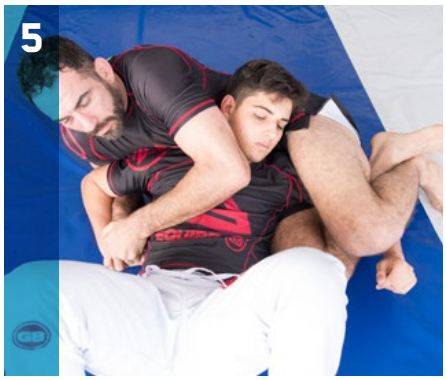


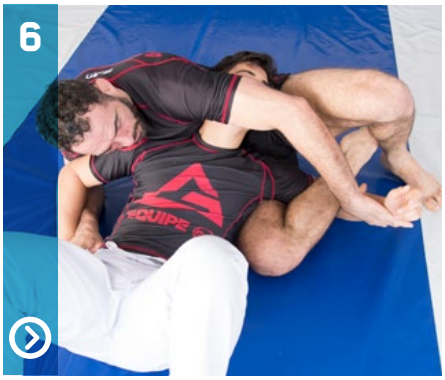


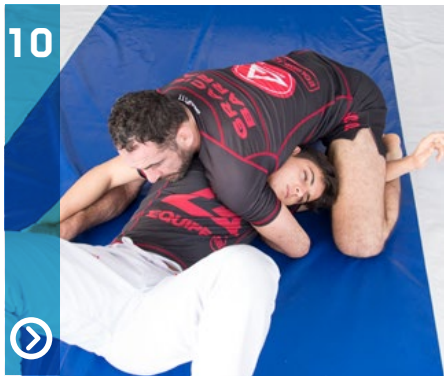


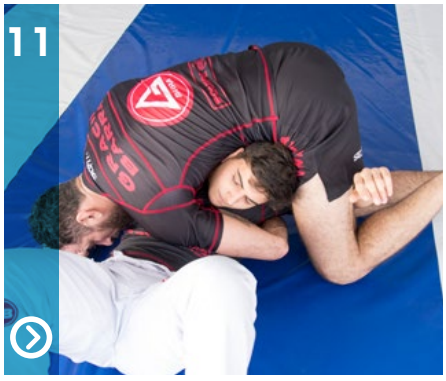
1. When playing open guard in nogi situations, I like to remember this frame. Your knees are tucked inside your arms, making a solid foundation for you to prevent passes and start attacks. 2.So, when your opponent engages this position, you cup their triceps with your hands as pictured. 3/4/5. From here, there's a nice arm drag / sweep you can hit. Pull your opponent's right arm forwards as you kick your right leg through; dragging their arm across your body and sitting up into the space you've created. 6/7/8. Hug your opponent's right leg and roll them onto their back for the sweep.

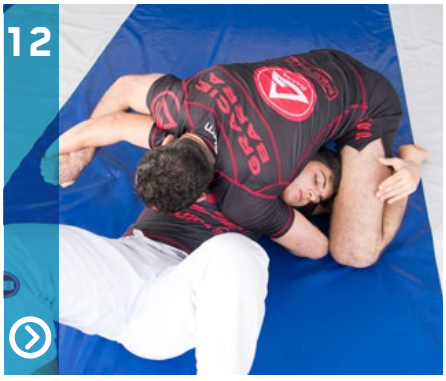












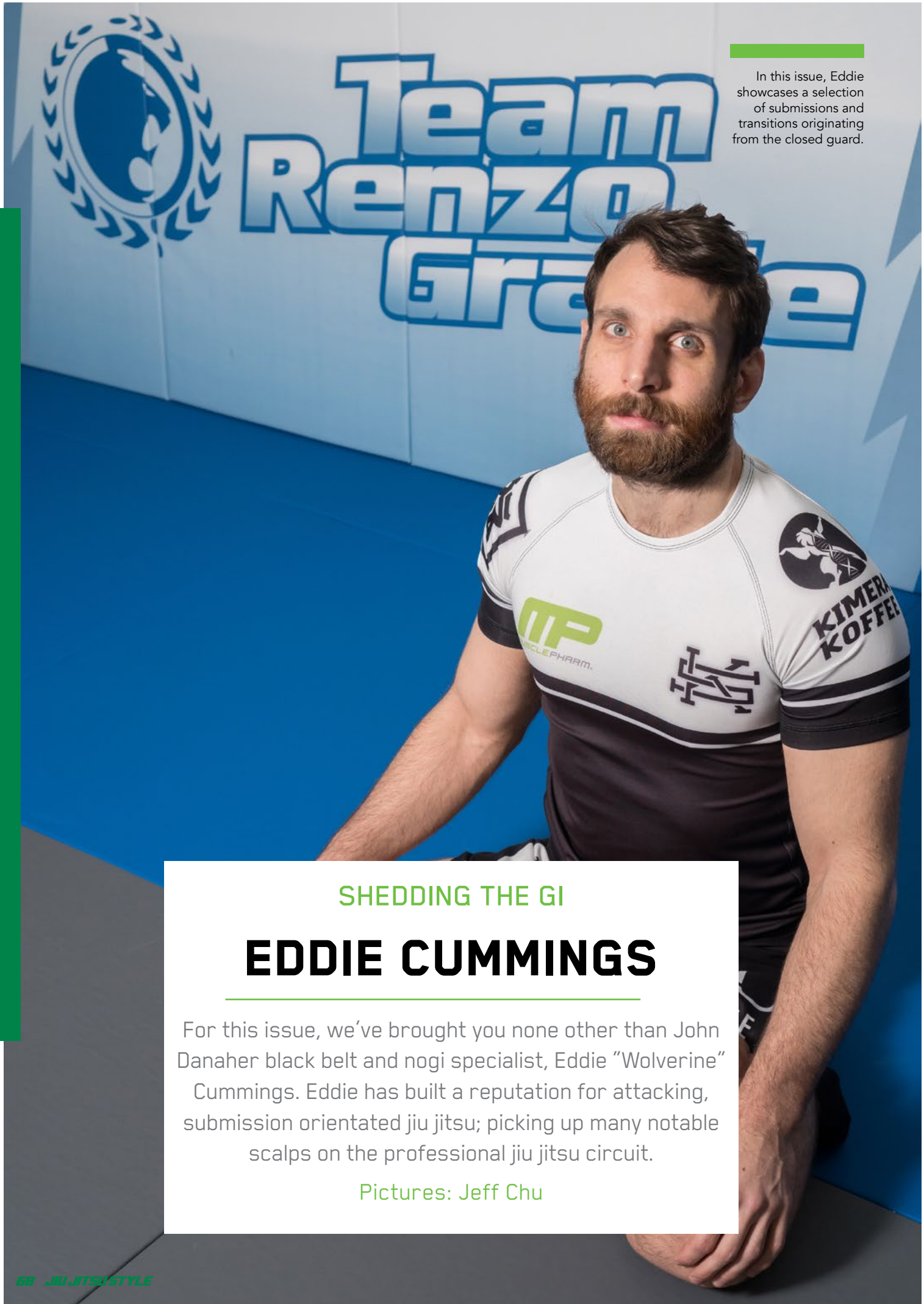
Kimura Attack from Crucifix

Hey Braulio,
Do you like to use any attacks from the crucifix position? Gi or nogi, I like to use the set up, but then don't really have much in the way of submissions from there.

- Callum

Hi Callum,
See what you think of this attack. I like it a lot, because it's a little unorthodox, therefore unexpected!

1. Starting from a conventional crucifix position. 2/3. Re-grip your hands over your opponent's right hand as pictured. 4/5. Next, sit up and drive your opponent's arm down to the mat. 6/7/8. From here, switch the position of your legs as pictured. 9/10/11/12. Your grip on your opponent's right hand is very tight, so you are able to use your left hand to help secure their head as you sit up and finish with a kimura.



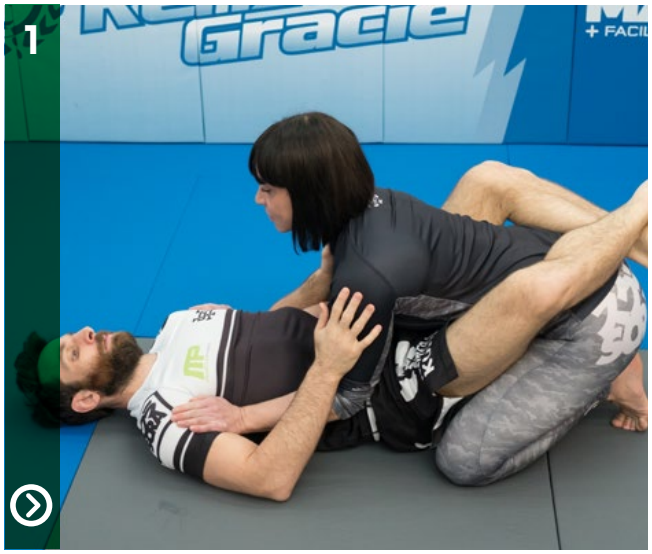
In this issue, Eddie showcases a selection of submissions and transitions originating from the closed guard.

SHEDDING THE GI

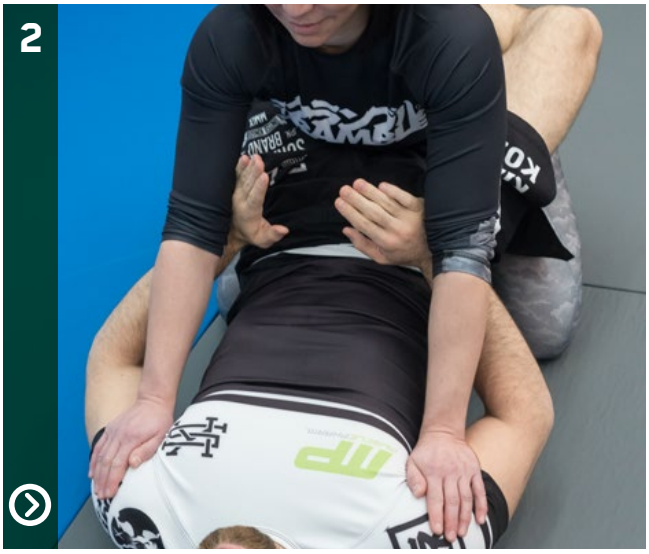
EDDIE CUMMINGS

For this issue, we've brought you none other than John Danaher black belt and nogi specialist, Eddie "Wolverine" Cummings. Eddie has built a reputation for attacking, submission orientated jiu jitsu; picking up many notable scalps on the professional jiu jitsu circuit.

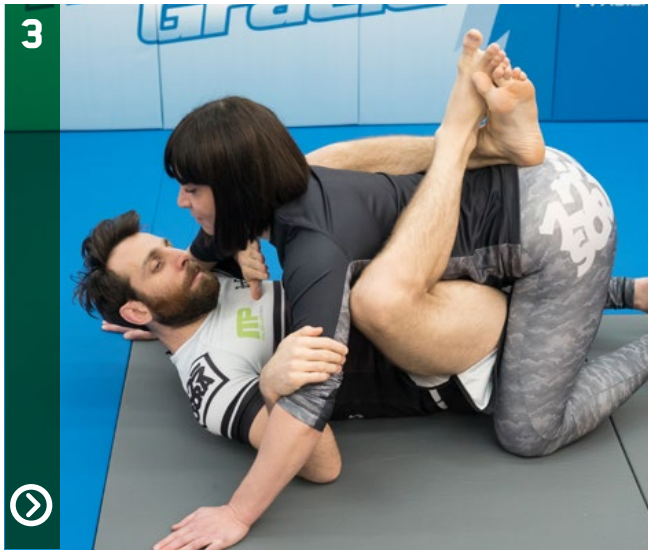
Pictures: Jeff Chu

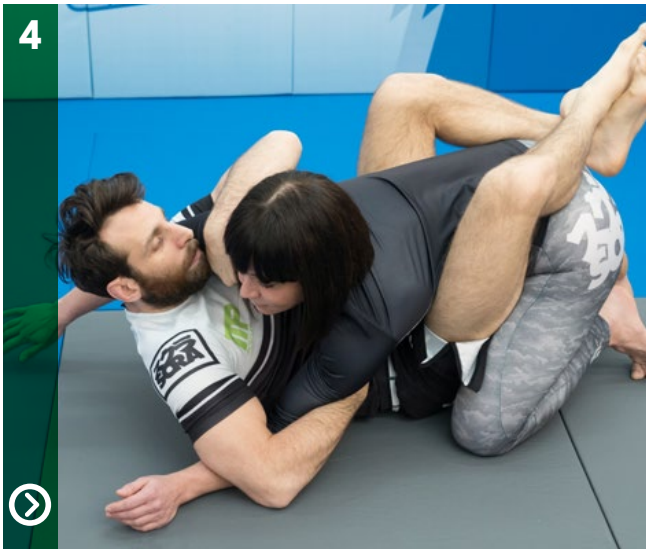


1: Starting from closed guard.

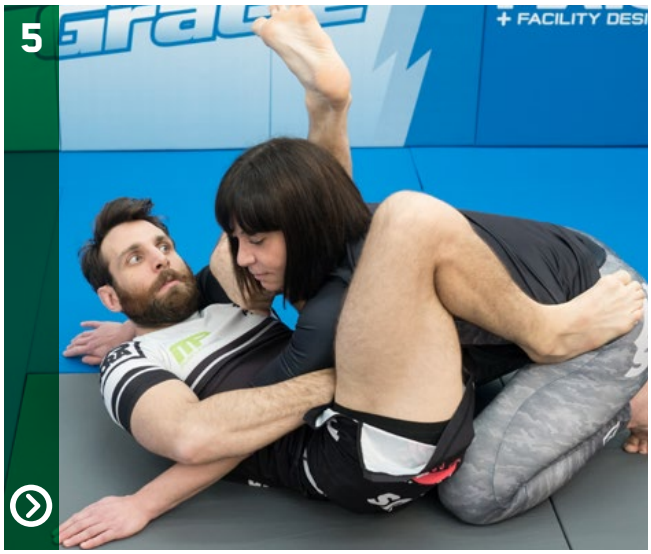


2/3: Swim your arms inside your opponent's, moving their arms off your chest as you bring your legs towards you to break their posture. Your opponent is forced to put their hands on the mat.

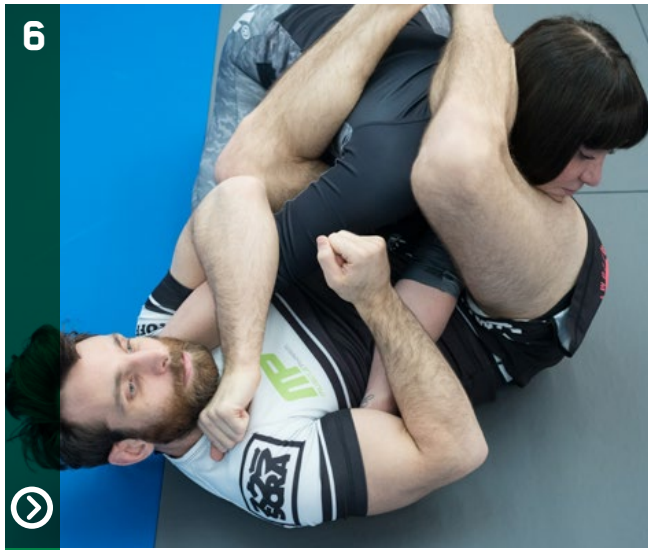




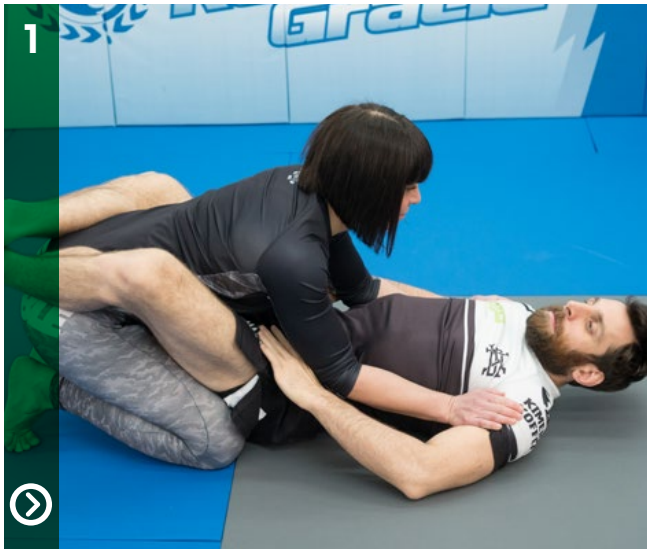
4: Circle your left arm around your opponent's right arm, cupping over their shoulder and securing the position, making it hard for them to posture-up and escape the attack. Note that you also need to maintain your grip on their arm with your right arm.



5: Escape your hips to the left, using your right foot on your opponent's hip to help create the attacking angle.



6: Finally, bring your right leg in front of your opponent's face. Notice from the pictures that you can maintain control of both of your opponent's arm. From here, you can finish a straight armlock on their right arm or a regular armlock on their left arm.

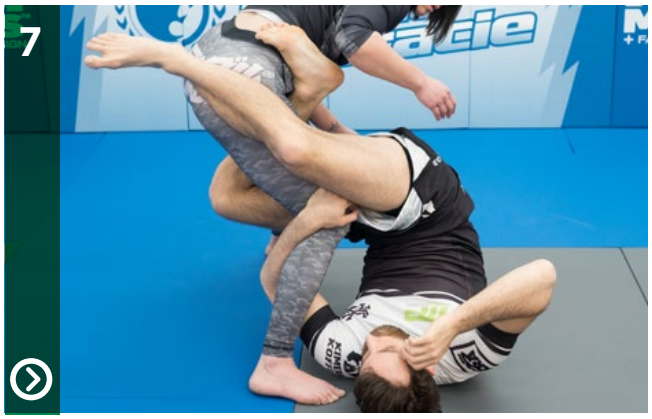


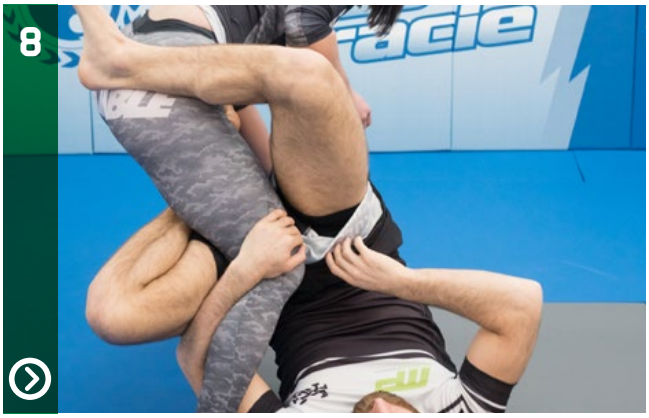
1: Starting from closed guard.

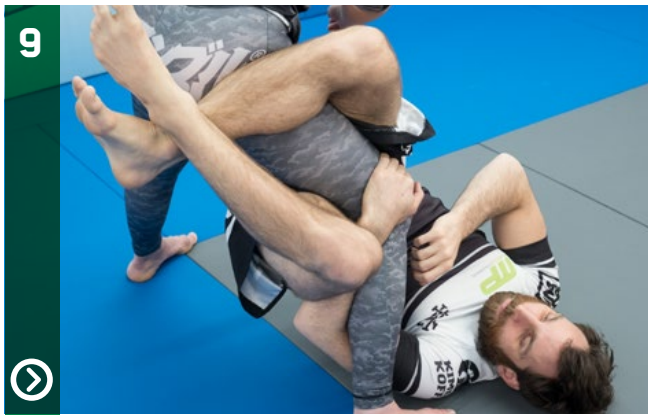
2: Your opponent manages to stand up without you controlling their posture.

3/4/5: Bring your left forearm underneath your opponent's right leg, using the grip to bring your hips closer to them as you open your guard.

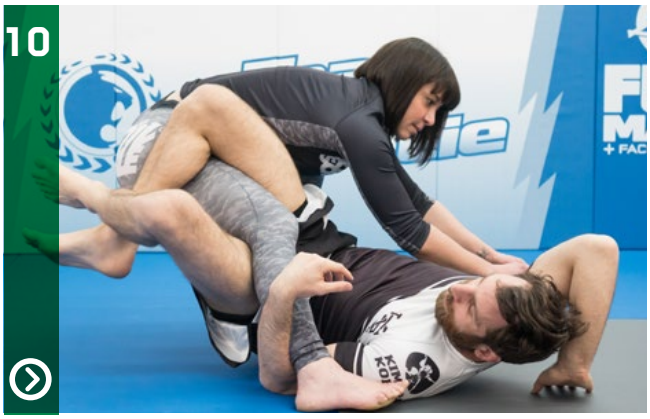
6/7/8: As you open your guard, drive your hips up and over your opponent's right knee, keeping your left arm secure on their leg.







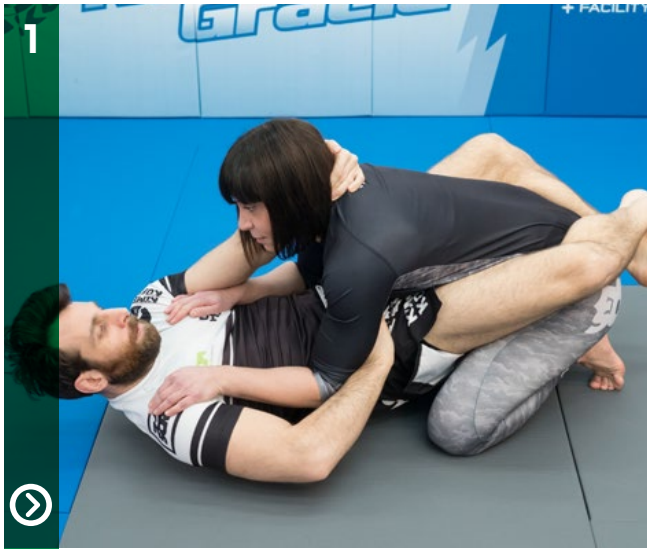
9: You can close your legs around your opponent's right leg at this point.



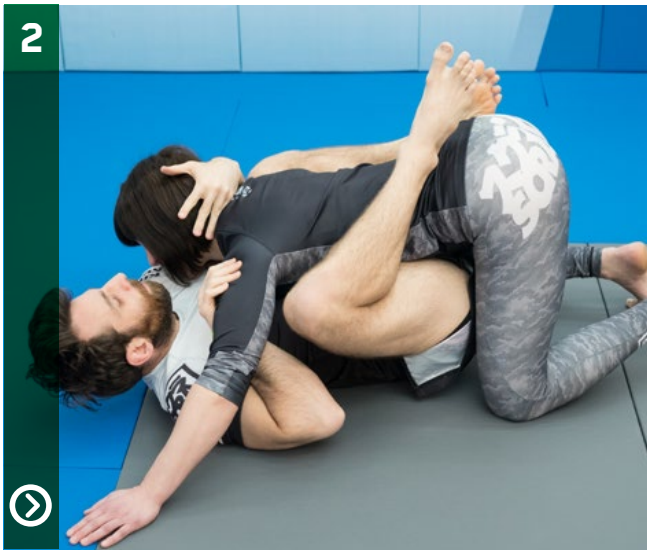
10/11: Next, bring your left grip low towards your opponent's ankle, drawing the leg towards you as you drive your hips forwards to bring their butt to the mat.

12/13: Keeping your legs secured, reach backwards to grip your opponent's toes and position them in your armpit, as pictured.

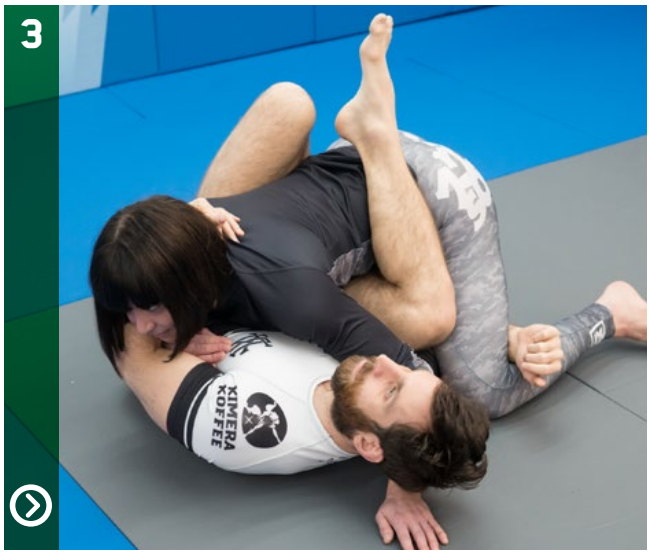
14: Finally, secure a gable grip, squeeze your arms together, open your chest and start to lean backwards to secure the heel hook.



1: Starting from closed guard, you've managed to start controlling your opponent's posture by cupping the back of their head with your left arm.

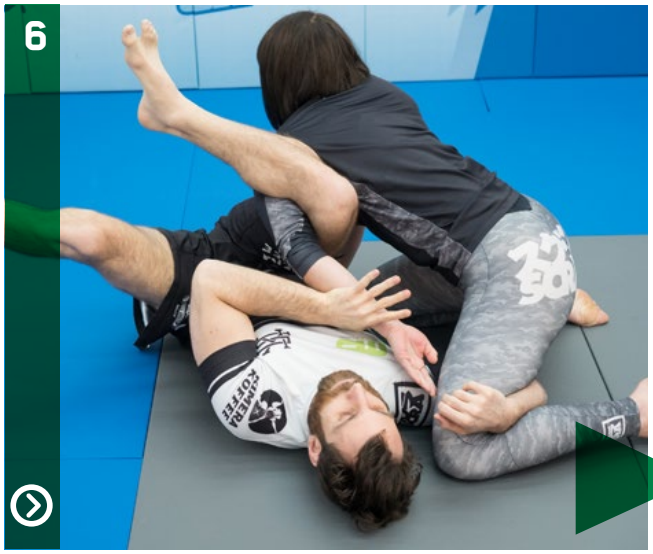


2: Continue to break their posture by bringing your legs towards your chest. Maintain the control on the back of their head and secure your right hand on their bicep.

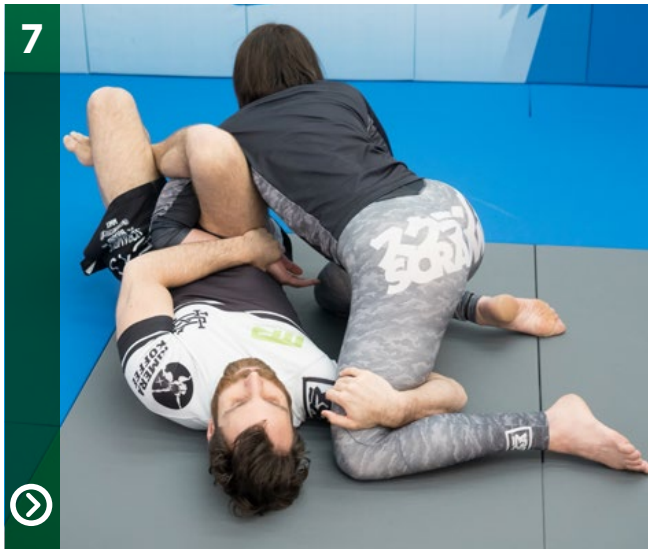


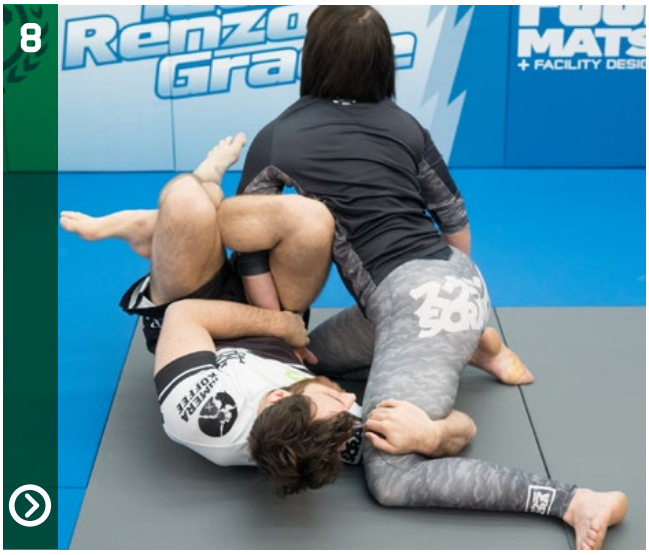
3: Keeping your opponent's posture low with your left hand, open your guard and start escaping your hips until you can reach underneath their left leg with your right hand.

4: From here, you can create a little space by pushing your opponent away with your left arm.



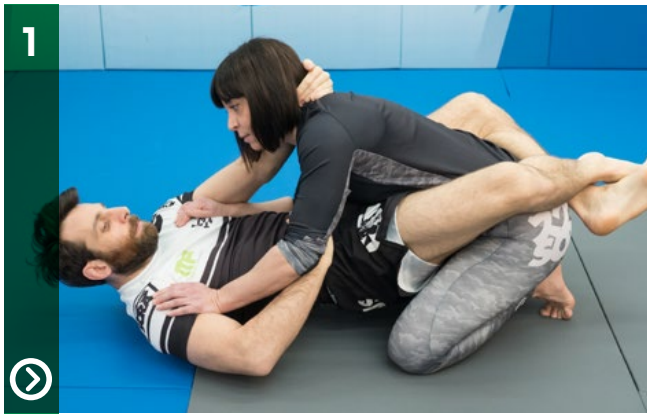
5/6/7: As you create space with your left arm, use the pendulum momentum from your left leg to swing your hips. If your opponent leaves their left arm on the floor, you are able to lock off an omoplata.





8/9: Often, especially when sweaty, your opponent will pull their arm out of the omoplata, but you can set up another attack. As soon as their arm is free, bring your hips over the top of their left leg, as pictured.

10/11/12: If you cannot finish the kneebar because your opponent starts to roll, don't worry; follow their movement, maintain your grips and finish the kneebar once they arrive seated on the mat.



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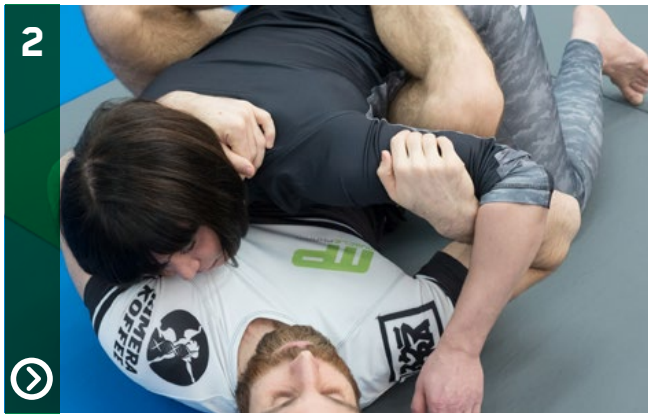
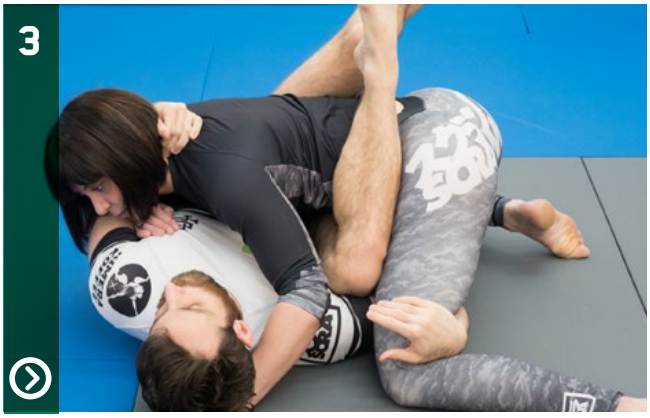
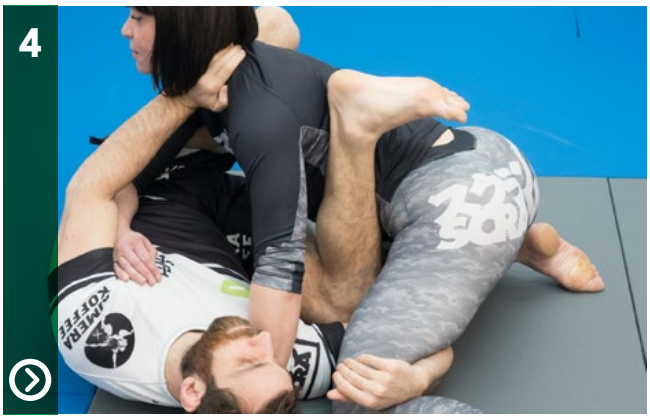


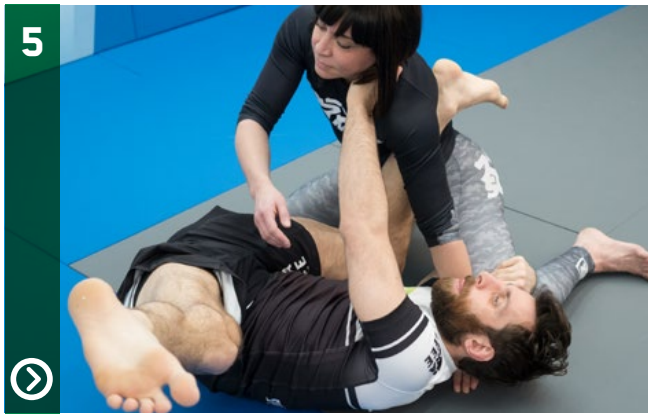
2: Continue to break their posture by bringing your legs towards your chest. Maintain the control on the back of their head and secure your right hand on their bicep.



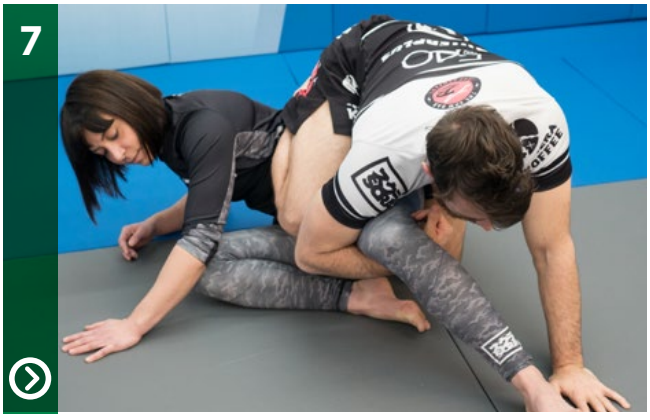
3: Keeping your opponent's posture low with your left hand, open your guard and start escaping your hips until you can reach underneath their left leg with your right hand.



4: From here, you can create a little space by pushing your opponent away with your left arm.



5/6/7: As you push away on your opponent with your left hand, use the pendulum momentum from your left leg to swing all the way on top of their left leg. You have a solid grip with your right hand, your right shin is across their thigh and you're squeezing your legs together.



8: Finally, dive forwards onto your right hip; secure a rear naked choke grip around your opponent's foot and calf. From here, drive your hips forward and keep their limb tight to your chest for the tap.

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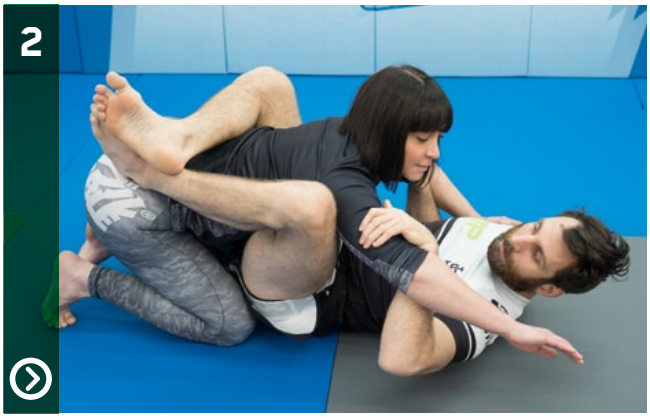
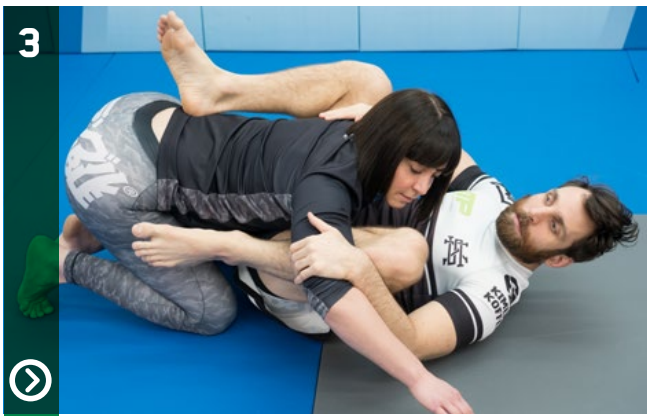
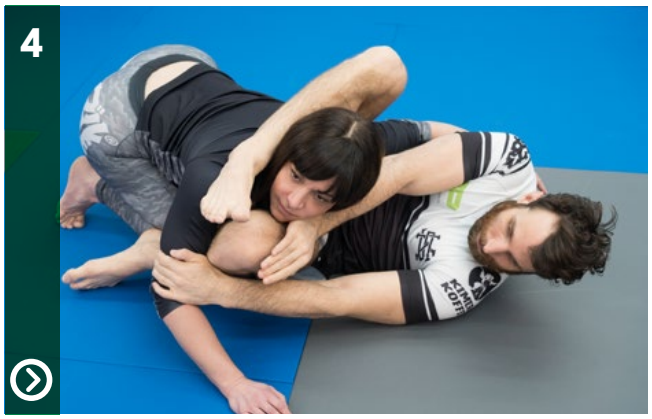
Progress JIU JITSU

1: Starting from closed guard.

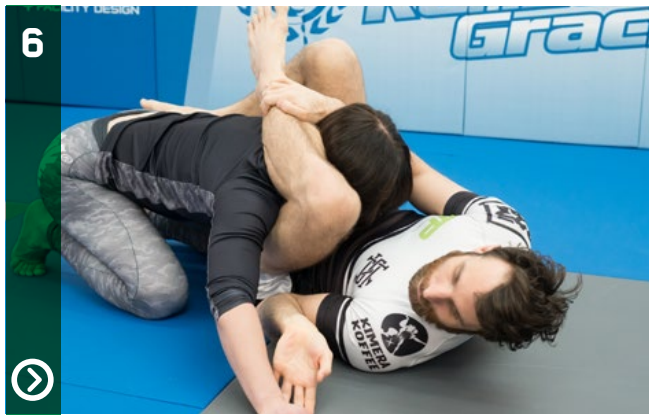


2: Swim your arms inside your opponent's, moving their arms off your chest as you bring your legs towards you to break their posture.

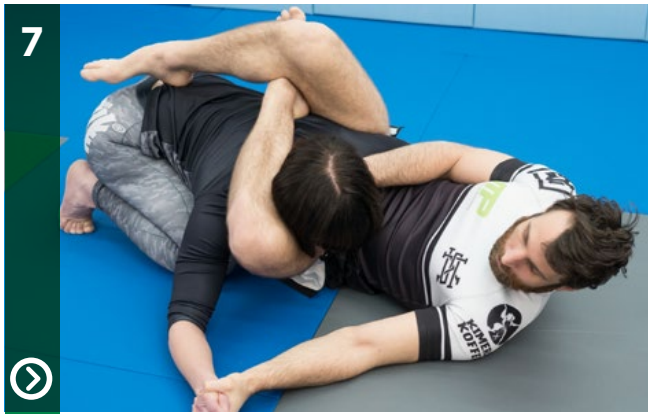


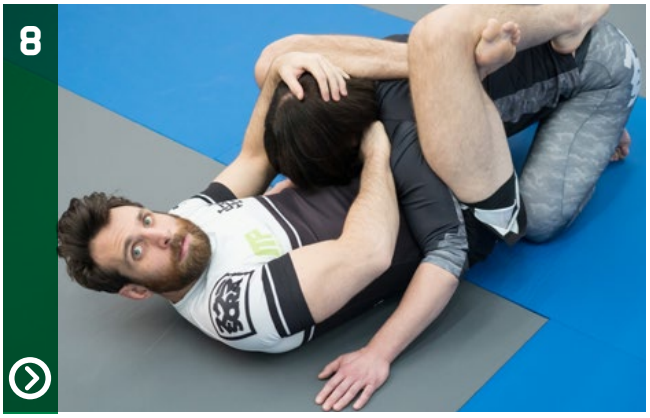


3/4: As your opponent's posture starts to break, and their arms head towards the mat, sneak your left shin in front of their right bicep as pictured. In a fluid motion, escape your hips to the right, drive their head away from you with your right hand and bring your right calf right across their back, locking them into position.

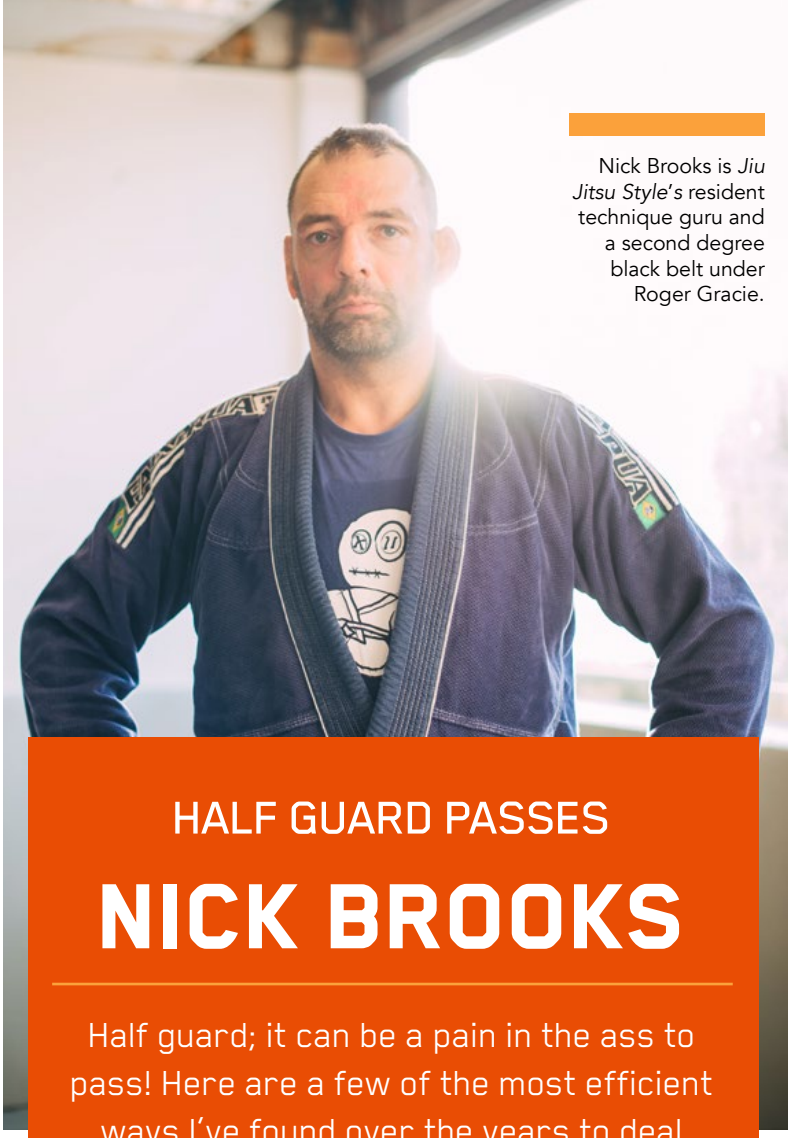


5/6: Start to square your hips up, bringing your left leg through to attack the submission. Control your shin to keep their posture broken and lock off the triangle.





7/8: FINISHING DETAILS: You'll notice that your opponent's left arm is not across your body in the conventional way you would finish a triangle, but this isn't a problem. Keep your left hand on the back of their head to stop them posturing up, but at the same time jam your right fist into the side of the neck – this blocks of the blood flow in the same way as you would when their arm comes across your waist with a conventional triangle.



Nick Brooks is *Jiu Jitsu Style*'s resident technique guru and a second degree black belt under Roger Gracie.

HALF GUARD PASSES

NICK BROOKS

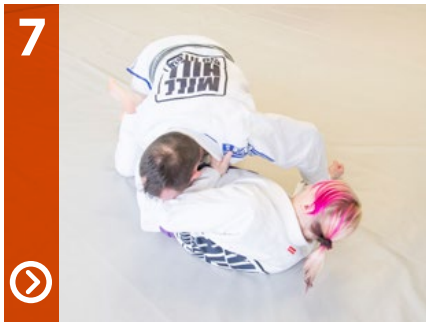
Half guard; it can be a pain in the ass to pass! Here are a few of the most efficient ways I've found over the years to deal with half guard, covering lots of options, depending on your opponent's reaction.

1: Your opponent is in half guard and using a low knee shield.

2: Circle your right hand around your opponent's legs, controlling their right shin as pictured. At the same time, control their right wrist with your left hand.

3/4: Sprawl to open up your opponent's half guard.

5/6: Switch the position of your feet as pictured to keep the guard open and initiate the pass.



7/8/9: Open your left arm up towards your opponent's head as you step around their hips to secure side control.

1: Your opponent is in half guard and using a low knee shield

2: Start by raising your right knee up from the floor, pushing their left shoulder to the mat and maintaining control of their right sleeve on the mat.

3: Step up with your left foot.

4: Continue to push down on your opponent's right shoulder while pulling up on their left sleeve to keep their back flat.

5: Keeping tension in your grips, drive your hip and knee forwards to escape the half guard.

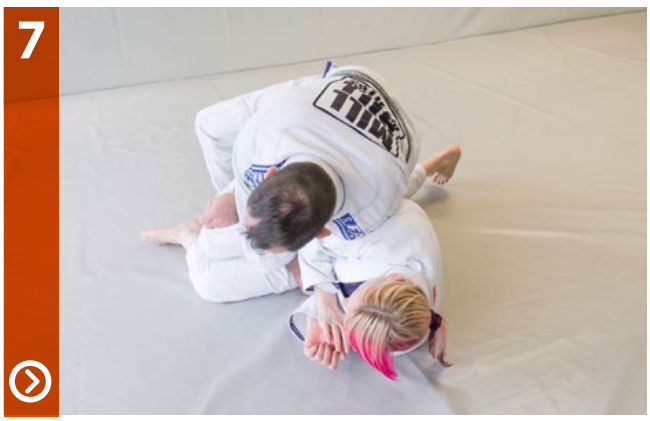
6: Finally, turn back into your opponent to secure side control.

1: Your opponent is in half guard, so start by controlling their right trouser with your left hand and their hip with your right hand.

2/3: Push down on their hips as you lift your knee through the gap, driving them to their left.

4/5: Fully collapse their knees to the floor.

6/7/8: Next, long-step backwards to secure the pass, continuing to move to your left until you stabilise the position.



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1: Your opponent is playing half guard, this time with a high knee shield.

2: Keep your head low and apply pressure onto your opponent's left shin and hips. Gain control of their belt to help flatten them out.

3: Reach back with your left hand and control your opponent's left trouser leg as low as possible.

4/5/6: Manoeuvre your opponent's hips away from you, before taking a back step to free yourself from the half guard.

7/8: Continue to move towards your opponent's head to secure the pass.

FIT TO FIGHT

CREATING A RESULTS BASED TRAINING PROGRAM

STEP 2: WHICH EXERCISES SHOULD I INCLUDE?

The most effective workouts are built on compound exercises: squats, deadlifts, bench and military presses, chin-ups/pull-ups and rows.

As you'll be your own coach, your job is to put these exercises into a balanced program. In this article, you'll find the exercise categories I draw from, along with how many times you'd use an exercise in a week (I'm also giving you some progressions and regressions for each lift).

As you look at the exercises, you can see that you have countless variations. I didn't list the endless list of things we could add and this is not the whole repertoire of everything I use, but it's the foundation of what gets great results, with consistency.

We can also use many different implements for many of the exercises, from barbells, dumbbells, sandbags, kettlebells, etc. Each one creates a different effect and variety in training.

NEXT ISSUE –

Step 3 - What order should the exercises be in?
Step 4 - How should I structure sets & reps?
Step 5 - How do I make sure I keep progressing?

SINGLE LEG

(2-3 times per week)
I'm dividing this into: split stance, single leg quad dominant, single-leg hip dominant.

Split stance
DB split squat
2 KB racked split squat
Reverse lunge
Foot elevated reverse lunge
2 KB racked reverse lunge
Forward lunge variations
DB Bulgarian/rear foot elevated split squat
2 KB DB Bulgarian/rear foot elevated split squat

Single-leg quad dominant
Low box step-ups
Step-ups
2 KB step-ups
Sprinter step-ups
2 KB sprinter step-ups
Sprinter step-ups w/overhead press

Single-leg hip dominant
Single-leg RDL
Landmine single-leg RDL
2 DB single-leg RDL

DEADLIFT

(1-2 times per week)
KB deadlift
Double KB deadlift
Trap bar deadlift
Sumo deadlift
Conventional deadlift
RDL
Stiff leg deadlift

HORIZONTAL PULL

(2 or 3 times per week)
Inverted rows (knees bent, knees straight, feet elevated)
Renegade rows
Chest supported rows
Low cable rows
Half kneeling cable rows
DB rows

SQUAT

(1-2 times per week)
KB goblet squat
2-KB front squat
BB front squat
BB box squat
BB safety bar back squat
Back squat

ANDY MARSHALL is the owner of *Villain Strength* and a strength and conditioning expert. He has worked with notable professional athletes including heavyweight boxing contender, Dillian Whyte, and British grappling standout, Dan Strauss.

HORIZONTAL PUSH

(2 times per week)
Push-up to single arm support
Med ball push-ups
Feet elevated push-ups
Vest push-ups
Chain/band push-ups
Single-arm DB bench
Alternating DB bench press
DB bench press
Incline DB bench press
BB floor/board press
BB bench press
BB incline bench press

VERTICAL PULL

(1 or 2 times per week)
Half kneeling lat pull down
Tall kneeling lat pull down
Chin-up ISO hold
Chin-up negatives
Band assisted chin-ups
Chin-ups
Weighted chin-ups
Pull-ups

VERTICAL PUSH

(0-1 times per week)
Tall kneeling landmine press
Half kneeling landmine press
DB/KB press
Single Arm DB/KB press
BB overhead press
Push press
Jerk

CORE

(2-4 times per week)
We're going to split these up into four categories: anti-extension (prone), anti-extension (supine), anti-lateral flexion, anti-rotation.

Each of the categories work on preventing you from bending backwards, sideways or prevent you from rotating. Does this mean there are no other core exercises? Not at all. They're just ones you're probably not doing and will attack your weak links and supercharge your program.

Anti-extension (prone)
Bird-dog
Plank on knees
Plank
Feet elevated plank
The bear
Ab wheel rollout
Ab wheel rollout ISO hold

Anti-extension (supine)
Core engaged dead bug
Reaching dead bug
Core engaged leg lowering
Wall press leg lowering
Leg lowering

Anti-lateral flexion
Side plank on wall
Side plank on knees
Side plank
Feet elevated side plank
Suitcase deadlift
Suitcase carry
Kettlebell windmill

Anti-rotation
Half kneeling Pallof press ISO
Tall kneeling Pallof press ISO
Pallof press ISO
Low cable Pallof press ISO
Pallof Press ISO with side step

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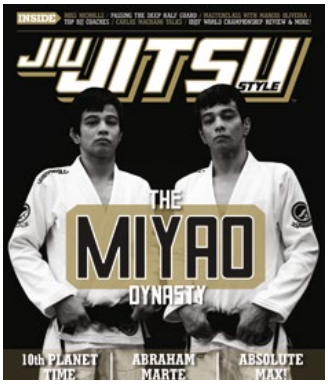

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REVIEW CORNER

HAYABUSA 'HABURI' COMPRESSION SERIES

AVAILABLE VIA WWW.HAYABUSAFIGHTWEAR.CO.UK FROM £42

In their constant pursuit of perfection, Hayabusa Fightwear have developed their latest range of compression gear: the Haburi series.

The Haburi series includes: tights, rashguards, compression shorts and loose shorts, so you really can kit yourself out entirely. The branding has been kept minimalistic, with only the use of Hayabusa wording and logo on clean, black clothing. Keeping the branding simple is actually quite refreshing, and it made a nice change packing a subtle rashi into our training bag for once!

Though they all fitted perfectly, we found the compression tights to be particularly comfortable during training. Whether wearing them underneath your gi or a pair of shorts, or for those of you confident enough to rock them on their own, we would recommend giving the Haburi tights a whirl - especially if you've never worn grappling tights before. Not only does it make things a whole lot more comfy while training, covering your legs helps protect against any nasty skin infections that could be lurking on the mat; you cover your body with a rashguard, so why not your legs?

The material Hayabusa have used feels very breathable, which helps keep you cool and take sweat away from your body during a session. It sounds stupid, but the gear does seem to be able to keep you dryer while rolling, while also staying light on your body. All in all, it's as good as it gets from a range of compression gear in terms of functionality; ideal for grappling, MMA, or just heading out for a run.

The prices are pretty reasonable as well: rashguards from £42, tights £50, compression shorts £45 and loose shorts £50.

BOOK REVIEW: THE HARDEST PATH

AVAILABLE VIA WWW.THEHARDESTPATH.COM FOR £9.99

Japan - the spiritual home of martial arts – has always been a nation epitomised by its deep-rooted histories and samurai culture. As the birthplace of many mainstream combat disciplines, it's a place that resonates with grapplers, strikers, fighters, philosophers and deep thinkers. Matt Jardine's debut title, *The Hardest Path*, focuses on his personal experiences while walking The Shikoku 88 Temple Pilgrimage, considered one of the world's most sacred of spiritual journeys.

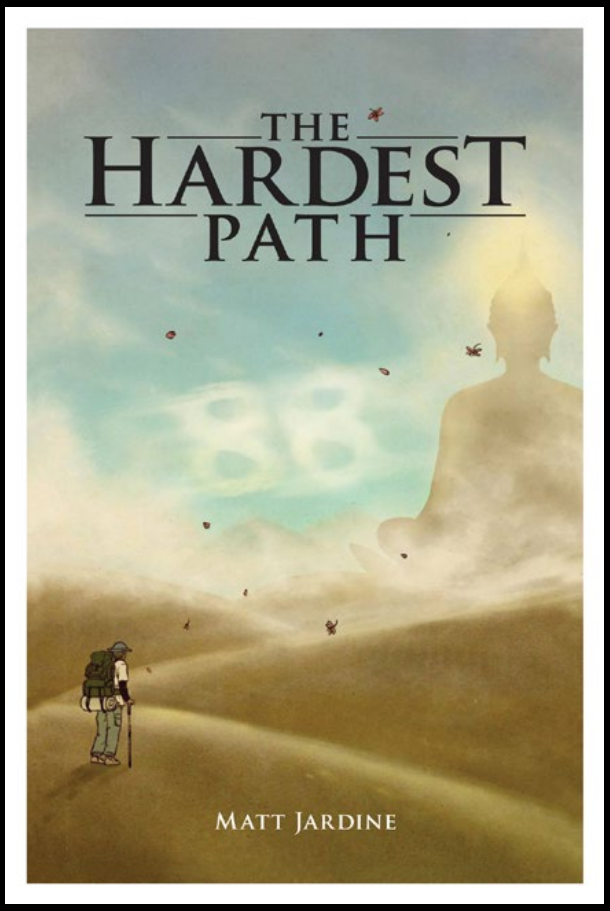
The 88 Temple Pilgrimage is traditionally carried out on foot, with the pilgrim (known as *henro*) walking the 750-mile journey within 30 to 60 days, and with little or no money. For the life-long martial artist and author, undertaking this daunting task was a bit of a cry for help, dissatisfied with the day-to-day grind we are all subconsciously ushered towards.

The Hardest Path focuses on Jardine's experiences while walking 'the 88', delving deeply into his thought process and spiritual awakening. We are introduced to the characters he met, the places he slept, the food he ate, the times he cried, the times he laughed; a full gamut of his emotional experiences during the gruelling journey.

At times, the book reads like an autobiography, as we learn about the author's personal life and awakenings during the pilgrimage. Jardine ponders the big questions we all face: Is there more to life than the 9-5? How do you define success? Am I reaching my full potential? Am I happy? Reading fresh opinions in light of his experiences is both compelling and thought provoking, leaving you ready to evaluate your own existence.

If you're looking for a textbook on The Shikoku 88 Pilgrimage, then this probably won't be for you. Whilst touching on the actual act of walking, where the route takes you, how the temples differ and what essentials you should have with you, Jardine's writing is much more focussed on emotional content and mindfulness.

Both thought provoking and fun, *The Hardest Path* is a lovely little read that puts a smile on your face and instils a burning desire to take a good look in the mirror.



DO OR DIE PRO COMP DUFFEL BAG

AVAILABLE VIA WWW.DOORDIE.COM FOR $135

Carrying on in their tradition of making super-stylish jiu jitsu gear, Do Or Die have recently launched a Pro Comp duffel bag, which is available in both 71L and 95L versions. Aesthetics aside, this is easily one of the most functional and durable duffle bags we've ever got our hands on, and it looks pretty slick, too!

When first casting our eyes on our 71L sample bag, it drew immediate comparisons to the popular range of North Face 'Base Camp' duffel bags – obviously a great start. Just like the North Face counterpart, Do Or Die have constructed their Pro Comp from water resistant material throughout, making it a great choice for every occasion.

The sheer quality of its construction must be stressed; the Pro Comp is as good as it gets, and easily rivals the construction of mainstream brands like the aforementioned North Face. The inside of the bag includes a drying sack for wet kit, as well as plenty of mesh zipper pockets. The base of the bag features a zipper compartment where you can stow away the shoulder straps if you prefer just to use the regular carry handles; a lovely touch.

As you can see from the pictures, the styling is slick, classy and – let's face it – straight-up cool. The sublimated Do Or Die and Hyperfly branding look amazing, especially when the light catches it and creates a slight shimmer. At a distance, it looks like a plain duffel bag, but get closer and you identify with the branding.

The medium size, 71L bag, offers plenty of space for all your training wear and even works well as a weekend travel bag. It almost felt wrong throwing our dirty gear into the duffel after training, but however you choose to use it, it's built to get the job done until the next ice age.

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GI SPOTLIGHT | ROLL SUPREME "BASE III" KIMONO

OVERVIEW

Roll Supreme are back on the scene with the hotly anticipated launch of their third kimono: Base III. Building on the success of their first gi versions, the latest offering is easily the best quality we've seen from this stylish brand.

THE JACKET

We have always been fans of Roll Supreme gear; their simple use of typography, clean shapes and subtle placements really resonate with our approach to design. The jacket features the trademark Roll Supreme logos on both upper arms, 'RS' initialling on the back of the skirt and a really slick BASE III logo on the left chest section. All design elements are kept simple, using white to offset the black kimono. We don't know if there's been a change in production for the Base III, but the quality is definitely a notch up from the first two versions of the product. The cut fits like a glove, the cuffs are reinforced appropriately, and the collar feels soft, yet sturdy. All in all, it's a solid jacket.

TROUSERS

Roll Supreme have really nailed it with these trousers in terms of comfort and fit – they really were a joy to train in. Though we're generally not fans of ripstop cotton, the material used on these trousers seemed super-soft, almost feeling like regular cotton trousers. Being constructed from ripstop material, the trousers are nice and light, making them even more comfy. In terms of branding, there's slick Roll Supreme wording on the back of the trousers, just below the belt line, as well as 'RS' initials on the front, around the hip area.

DETAILS

This is a great all-round product and will be a sure hit with those of you who like a lighter kimono. The styling is IBJJF legal, so the Base III becomes a solid option for competition. We are pulled towards this gi by its beautiful simplicity – there really are not many kimonos out there like it. Maybe it's the fact that we haven't worn a black gi in a while, but we found that the combination of colouring, comfort and styling made the Base III awesome fun to train in.

SUMMARY

Classy styling, solid construction and amazing rolling performance make this a fantastic gi for every occasion. We don't know if Roll Supreme intend to release it in other colours, but we loved the Base III in black; in fact it's probably our favourite black kimono.

Coming in at £89.99, this is a very appealing price point, and you can rest assured you're getting a good deal.

AVAILABLE VIA ROLLSUPREME.COM FOR £89.99

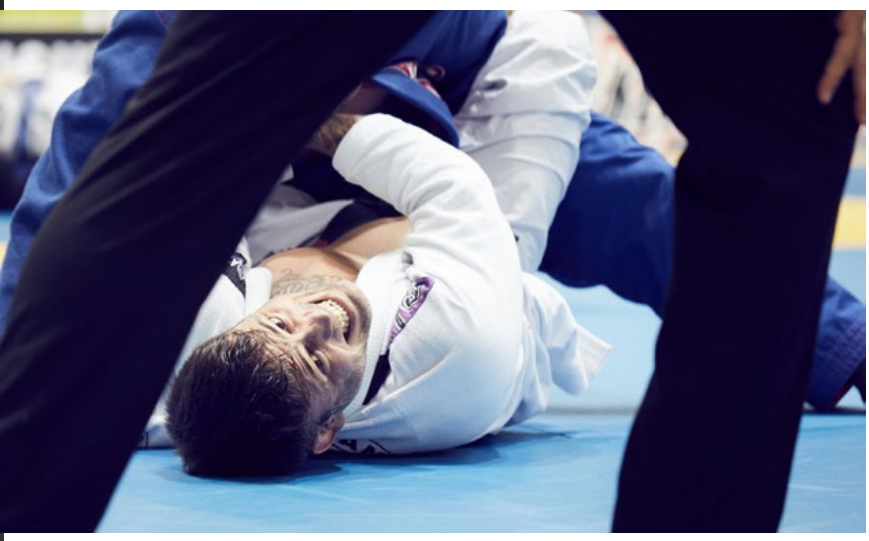
PICTURES: LUKE JARVIS

IBJJF EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

The European Championships has really come to the fore in recent years, establishing itself as the busiest event in the IBJJF calendar and attracting jiu jitsu athletes to Lisbon from all over the world to kick-start their year.

In what has become a sustained spell of dominance, Leandro Lo was the star of the show, taking home gold in both the heavyweight and open class divisions. It's crazy to think that it wasn't that long ago that Leandro was competing (and winning) as a lightweight! Having bulked-up considerably for the 2017 roster, and with the likes of Marcus Buchecha and the returning Roger Gracie waiting in the wings, it's set to be a busy twelve months for Lo.

Once again, it was Alliance's latest star, Tayane Porfirio, who was on electrifying form in the women's brackets. Her size had led to comparisons with her fellow Alliance teammate, Gabi Garcia, but that really doesn't do Tayane justice. Though competing in the super heavyweight division, she moves like a lightweight: pulling guard, sweeping, passing and often submitting. Porfirio left Lisbon as a double gold medallist, and we expect much more to come from her this year.



WOMEN'S RESULTS

BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / ROOSTER
1 - Serena Gabrielli - Flow
2 - Outi Järvilehto - Brasa CTA

BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / LIGHT-FEATHER
1 - Gezary Matuda Kubis Bandeira - American Top Team
2 - Kristina Sofia Puruganan Barlaan - Brasa CTA
3 - Sofia Rosa Amarante - Fight Sports
3 - Thamires Diógenes de Aquino - GF Team

BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / FEATHER
1 - Mackenzie Lynne Dern - Gracie Humaita
2 - Emilie Maxine M. H. Thylin - Gracie Humaita
3 - Carolina Carriello - Gracie Barra
3 - Yasmine Clarisa Wilson - Roger Gracie Academy

BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / LIGHT
1 - Beatriz de Oliveira Mesquita - Gracie Humaita
2 - Luiza Monteiro Moura da Costa - NS Brotherhood
3 - Fabiana Alves Borges - Gracie Barra
3 - Tammi Alana Musumeci - Brasa CTA

BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / MIDDLE
1 - Ana Carolina Vieira Srour - GF Team
2 - Paivi Anneli Aittamaa - Checkmat
3 - Amanda Loewen - SBG International (SBGI)
3 - Barbara dos Santos - Universidade Católica de Brasília

BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / MEDIUM-HEAVY
1 - Nathiely de Jesus - PSLPB Cicero Costha B
2 - Ida Fløisvik - Roger Gracie Academy
3 - Karolina Zawodnik - Brasa CTA
3 - Olga Lyashevska - Carlson Gracie Team

BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / HEAVY
1 - Claudia Fernanda Onofre V. Doval - De La Riva JJ

BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / SUPER-HEAVY
1 - Tayane Porfírio de Araújo - Alliance
2 - Venla Orvokki Luukkonen - Hilti BJJ Jyvaskyla

BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / OPEN CLASS
1 - Tayane Porfírio de Araújo - Alliance
2 - Beatriz de Oliveira Mesquita - Gracie Humaita
3 - Claudia Fernanda Onofre V. Doval - De La Riva JJ
3 - Mackenzie Lynne Dern - Gracie Humaita

MEN'S RESULTS

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / ROOSTER
1 - Koji Shibamoto - Tri-Force Jiu-Jitsu Academy
2 - Rodnei Barbosa Gabriel Junior - Zenith BJJ
3 - Guilherme Angelus Montenegro - GF Team
3 - Vincent Nguyen - Atos Jiu-Jitsu

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / LIGHT-FEATHER
1 - Michael Musumeci Jr. - Brasa CTA
2 - Gabriel Afonso dos Santos Moraes - Alliance
3 - Hiago George Santos Silva - PSLPB Cicero Costha
3 - Joao Ricardo Bordignon Miyao - PSLPB Cicero Costha

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / FEATHER
1 - Rubens Charles Maciel - Alliance
2 - Gianni Paul Grippo - Alliance
3 - Gabriel Marangoni de Oliveira - Brasa CTA
3 - Isaque Alberto de Oliveira Paiva - Saikoo Jiu-Jitsu

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / LIGHT
1 - Marcio Andre C. Barbosa Junior - Nova Uniao
2 - Luan de Carvalho Alves - Nova Uniao
3 - Andris Auseklis Brunovskis - Atos Jiu-Jitsu
3 - Masahiro Iwasaki - Carpe Diem

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / MIDDLE
1 - Marcos Vinícius da Silva Tinoco - Alliance
2 - Alec Jerrod Baulding - Alliance
3 - Isaque Bahiense Braz - Alliance International
3 - Jaime Soares Canuto - GF Team

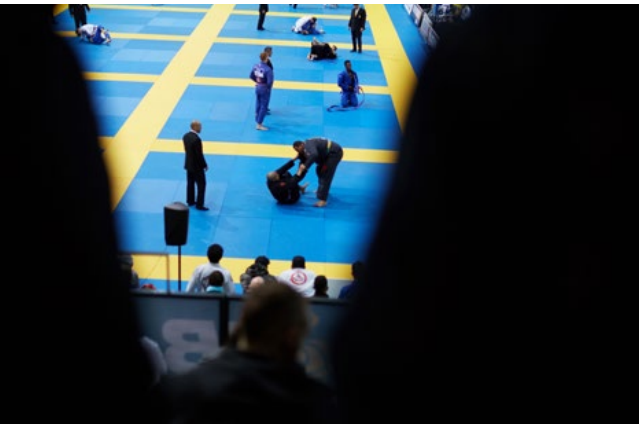
BLACK / ADULT / MALE / MEDIUM-HEAVY
1 - Rodrigo Fajardo - Gracie Barra
2 - Horlando de Jesus Monteiro - Nova Uniao
3 - Matheus Spirandeli Souza - NS Brotherhood
3 - Vinicius Carvalho Garcia - NS Brotherhood

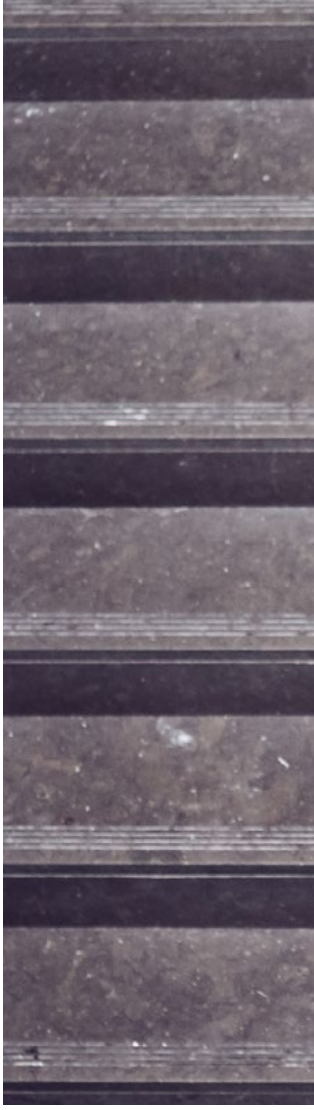
BLACK / ADULT / MALE / HEAVY
1 - Leandro Lo Pereira do Nascimento - NS Brotherhood
2 - Tanner Wade Rice - Soul Fighters BJJ Connecticut
3 - Adam Wardzinski – Checkmat
3 - Jesse Juhani Urholin - Alliance

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / SUPER-HEAVY
1 - Mahamed Aly Santos da Silva - Team Lloyd Irvin
2 - Lucio Furtado Rodrigues - Gracie Barra
3 - Christopher Bowe - Gracie Barra JJ
3 - Vitor Fabio Martins Toledo - Atos Jiu-Jitsu

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / ULTRA-HEAVY
1 - Igor Silva - GF Team
2 - Ricardo Ferreira Evangelista - GF Team
3 - Carlos Eduardo de Araujo Farias - Brasa CTA
3 - Gustavo Dias Elias - Ribeiro Jiu-Jitsu

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / OPEN CLASS
1 - Leandro Lo Pereira do Nascimento - NS Brotherhood
2 - Claudio Calasans Camargo Júnior - Atos Jiu-Jitsu
3 - Mahamed Aly Santos da Silva - Team Lloyd Irvin
3 - Manuel Ribamar V. de Oliveira Filho - NS Brotherhood





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WORDS: MATT BENYON

IS GARRY TONON THE GREATEST OF OUR TIME?

I suppose the first thing to do would be to define what I mean by "The Greatest". In terms of pure competition wins and world titles, there are many stronger contenders for that title than Garry.

I am more interested in the athlete as a whole; their attitude to life and competing, their personality, and how that matches up with their jiu jitsu skills.

My first introduction to Garry Tonon was probably in the heady early days of alternative jiu jitsu competitions - Jiu Jitsu Battle, Brown Belt Kumite, Five invitational… American (or rather, non-Brazilian) superstars of our little sport were still few and far between, but along came this brash (yet well-spoken), mustachioed purple belt giving some of the more well-established players fits on the competition mat.

Garry soon made a name for himself, picking up notable wins with some draws and some losses, but every match had something in common: excitement. At a time when there was a low murmur of dissatisfaction with the status quo and in particular with traditional competitions and the stalemates that often arose as top competitors stalled to win by advantage, a competitor like Garry was a breath of fresh air. It was the submission he was obsessed with, as we all are, and the difference was, he'd go for it even if it meant losing the match.

"GARRY TONON TAKES THE HARDEST FIGHTS AND, WITHIN THOSE FIGHTS, TAKES THE HARDEST ROUTE TO VICTORY - THE SUBMISSION"

When we began working on the first Polaris, we knew we wanted to have Garry on the card. He proved to be very easy to work with, extremely grateful for the opportunity to fight on the show and offering suggestions - but not demands - for opponents. In the end, he was matched up with feared MMA leg locker, Marcin Held, a challenge he relished. Garry heel hooked Held, showing us just how good he was on the mat. After that, he drank as many beers as he could with the Polaris team on the mean streets of Cardiff, Wales. Garry doesn't take himself too seriously. Foreign fighters were requested to meet with UK immigration services bright and early the next day (a story for another time!) and if I recall, Garry and Eddie Cummings, without a wink of sleep between them, were the first ones there, right on time.

The ongoing theme for Garry's Polaris matches was "give me the toughest match possible." At the time of Polaris 2, Masakazu Imanari was still a legendary figure, a destroyer of limbs, a stone faced Japanese assassin standing at the top of a pile of bodies with unravelled knees and ankles pointing the wrong way. "Yeah, I want that guy. Let me have him." Garry wanted to test himself and take risks, not only with his career but with his well-being. After heel hooking Imanari, we began planning for Polaris 3. Garry had called out Rousimar Palhares in an interview: a fight that seemed ludicrous if not downright suicidal on paper. Palhares was not only much bigger than Garry, he was also an accomplished grappler and MMA fighter with a controversial history of injuring his opponents. Garry didn't hesitate, and asked us to set up the match.

By this point, having worked on a couple of pro grappling events, we knew about the different ways in which fighters would think. Some would profess to be ready to take on anyone and yet, mysteriously, become silent when a tough opponent was presented. Most (but not all) of the famous world champion black belt types, you could basically forget about - they all wanted to pick their opponents, pick their rules, demand astronomical show fees. Garry Tonon wanted the biggest, baddest mother****er, he wanted him now, and he was even willing to give up his purse to fight him. Mention here must also go to Eddie Cummings, who was equally as eager to face the strongest opponent possible and was also willing to fight for a minimal fee to facilitate that.

Not only did Garry readily accept the fight against Palhares, he began taunting him online. Memes about gigantic balls were made and shared. The fight happened and although it was a draw, it was nevertheless spectacular, with many giving Garry the upper hand due to his relentless submission attacks. At that point, Garry Tonon basically become my personal jiu jitsu hero, rushing headlong into danger as fast as possible with nothing but submission and glory on his mind.

Since that time, the list of accomplishments and general badassery has grown longer. As a late and undersized replacement for the EBI Light Heavyweight tournament, many thought Garry had no more than a narrow chance at victory. He won his third EBI title that night. In another organisation in the USA, Garry had multiple opponent changes and accepted a very late replacement in the much larger UFC fighter and world champion Antonio Carlos Junior, to whom Garry lost via flying triangle. Undaunted and with yet more opponent changes a week later, Garry agreed to fight AJ Agazarm in the gi despite - by all accounts - a total lack of any serious gi training. Just stop to think about that for a moment - coming off a loss, Garry accepted a fight against someone with a very solid record in the gi who had every chance of beating him. How many professional jiu jitsu black belts would take such a fight? Not only take it, but win it? Not many is the answer. Not many at all.

Perhaps as an ersatz event promoter we have a different view of things, but Garry Tonon is truly a rare breed. Most athletes, perhaps rightfully so, will protect their reputation above all. They will take tough but winnable fights. They will avoid danger, avoid "no win situations" such as a fight against an unknown, or someone with fewer achievements than them. They will stall if it means taking home a medal at the world championships. They will cultivate an angelic online presence, shy away from criticism. Not Garry Tonon. Garry takes the hardest fights and, within those fights, takes the hardest route to victory - the submission. Jiu jitsu needs more Garry Tonons.

Creative Director
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